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**Death, piety, and social engagement
in the life of the seventeenth century London artisan,
Nehemiah Wallington**

By

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and that the work contained therein is my own, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Abstract

Previous studies of the seven extant manuscripts of the seventeenth century Londoner, Nehemiah Wallington, have focused on the psychological effects of Puritan theology as the cause for his deep spiritual crisis and for his uncontrollable urge to document his inner mental and emotional experiences in a diary or journal. This thesis takes a somewhat different approach, starting from a prominent and recurrent theme in Wallington's manuscripts: his thoughts of and experiences with death. From an early age, Wallington lost close family members to illness. Four of his five children died in early childhood. He lived through outbreaks of plague, and recorded into his manuscripts casualties wrought by civil war and inexplicable accidents that took place around him in the City of London. Evidence from what Wallington wrote about these events in his manuscripts indicates that he responded to his frequent encounters with human mortality through his understanding and practice of Puritan theology and piety. Responding to death through religious belief and observance was not an innovation: some have argued that the late medieval Catholic Church in England provided, through the Mass and the doctrine of purgatory, ways to respond to death that brought comfort and inspired fresh engagement with the world. Yet scholars have tended to see Wallington's recourse to Puritan religion as something that made him want to throw his life away in suicidal despair, rather than as a means to ease his sorrows and encourage him to engage with society again (in other words, as a means to come to terms with death which in some ways paralleled the momentum of older Catholic devotion, but in a new and distinctively Reformed context). Studies of Wallington's despair have focused only on a particular youthful episode. However, this thesis will look at the theme of death over Wallington's lifelong pursuit of Puritan theology and piety. From an examination of his seven extant manuscripts, it will show not only how Wallington turned to Puritan theology and piety in the face of death, but also how his understanding and approach changed over time. His response developed from a compulsive emotional reaction to a clear strategy that involved reflecting on death in his own experiences of loss, as well as in the Bible and other printed materials, all of which he recorded in his manuscripts for others to read. Wallington's decision to write down his reflections led him out of despair and the temptation to abandon his life, to express in his later manuscripts an active desire to engage with the world around him out of faith and trust in the vivifying power of Christ.

The thesis starts with an introduction to Nehemiah Wallington and his context, and to the theme of death in his extant manuscripts (chapter one). Next, it explores how Wallington responded to his encounters with death by taking up writing, an activity that developed from an urgent need to keep a personal daybook of his sins to a more deliberate attempt to write for others (chapter two). After this, the thesis considers how Wallington's early response to death inspired his attempt to construct a 'self' through his understanding of the Christian doctrine of mortification (chapter three). Then it provides a fresh account of Wallington's suicide attempts: how his attempt to construct a 'self' through mortification initially led him to despair and to the temptation to negate his 'self' and his life in the world (chapter four). Following this, the thesis goes beyond the account of despair to argue that Wallington overcame his temptation to commit suicide and resolved to engage with the world around him, by meditating on and studying death (chapter five). Finally, the thesis shows how the

evidence presented in earlier chapters gives a fresh perspective on Wallington, and suggests how this might contribute to a better understanding of continuity and change in the piety of seventeenth century Reformed Christianity (chapter six).

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Abbreviations

BL MS 1457	Nehemiah Wallington, 'A Memorial of God's Judgments upon Sabbath breakers, Drunkards and other vile livers' (British Library, Sloane MS. 1457)
BL MS 21935	Nehemiah Wallington, 'A Bundle of Mercies' (British Library, Additional MS. 21935)
BL MS 40883	Nehemiah Wallington, 'The Growth of a Christian' (British Library, Additional MS. 40883)
BL MS 922	Nehemiah Wallington, 'Copies of Profitable and Comfortable Letters' (British Library, Sloane MS. 922)
FS MS V.a.436	Nehemiah Wallington, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books' (Folger Shakespeare Library, MS. V.a.436)
GL MS 204	Nehemiah Wallington, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance' (Guildhall Library, London, MS. 204)
TP MS 68.20	Nehemiah Wallington, 'A Record of Mercies Continued, or yet God is Good to Israel' (Tatton Park Library, MS. 68.20)

Chapter One

Introduction: death in the manuscripts of Nehemiah Wallington

Nehemiah Wallington was born in London on 12 May 1598, during the final years of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and died in the same year as Oliver Cromwell, in August 1658. He was the tenth of twelve children and the fourth son born to John Wallington (a turner and liveryman of the Turner's Company) and Elizabeth Hall Wallington (daughter of Jane and Anthony Hall, a London skinner). As a character on the stage of seventeenth century English society, Nehemiah did not emerge as a significant figure. He did not attend Oxford or Cambridge, enter the clergy, or mingle with those at court. He did not impact his culture through art, or compose a great play to regale Jacobean audiences and demand the attention of literary enthusiasts for decades and even centuries after his death. In many respects, Nehemiah lived a common and inconsequential existence, following the vocational path of his father and never leaving the area of London where he was born. Yet, it is out of the life of this seemingly irrelevant and minor character from seventeenth century England that a vital resource has been passed down to students of early modern history.

Part of what makes the life of Nehemiah Wallington so intriguing is the way he responded to events that brought change to his life. These alterations to what appears to have been an otherwise settled and secure existence started in early childhood. While Nehemiah's family never migrated from the City of London and his father flourished in his profession as a wood-turner there, the death of several family members between the ages of five and eleven years of age set a course that would demand from him constant reflection and meditation. His mother Elizabeth died in

1603. Soon after, his father, John, married the widow, Joan Hinde. The marriage of John and Joan brought into Nehemiah's childhood home a stepbrother, Philip Hinde. When Joan died only ten months after her marriage to John, Nehemiah's father married for a third time to the widow, Alice Harrison. Alice brought into her marriage to John Wallington two children from a former marriage, a son, Richard, and a daughter, Anne. Alice also conceived a child with John, a half-sister to Nehemiah named Patience. In 1609, an illness took the life of Philip, Richard, and Anne. Beginning with the death of his stepsiblings, Nehemiah turned to religion and the practice of piety to cope with the changes that these deaths brought him.¹

We know about Nehemiah Wallington and his attempt to manage change in his life from seven extant manuscripts that were once part of a fifty-manuscript collection. The composition of such a large body of writing was an incredible feat for an individual who earned his living as a craftsman. A list of these fifty manuscripts, which includes the start dates and titles that Nehemiah assigned to each one, is found in the last of his seven extant writings.² Four of these seven extant manuscripts are now held in the British Library under the manuscript references: 'A Memorial of God's Judgments upon Sabbath Breakers, Drunkards and Other Vile Livers' (Sloane Manuscript 1457); 'A Bundle of Mercies' (Additional Manuscript 21935); 'The Growth of a Christian' (Additional Manuscript 40883); and 'Copies of Profitable and Comfortable Letters' (Sloane Manuscript 922). The earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance' (Manuscript 204), is now held at the London Metropolitan Archives. 'A Record of Mercies Continued, or yet God is Good to Israel' (Manuscript 68.20) is held at Tatton Park Library. The last

¹ These events are discussed further in this thesis on pp. 23, 49 n. 1, and 158.

² Nehemiah provided a list of forty-seven of these manuscripts in his last extant manuscript, FS MS V.a.436, fols. iii- viii. He added three more titles to this list on an insert located in the same manuscript between fols. 50 and 51.

extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books' (Manuscript V.a.436), is held at the Folger Shakespeare Library, in Washington D.C.³

The dates for all of Nehemiah's manuscripts, extant and non-extant, could be divided into three periods: an early period where he begins his manuscript writing; a middle period where the bulk of his writing occurred; and a final period where his writing begins to taper off. These divisions are based on intervals in Nehemiah's efforts at composition where it appears he either took a break from composition, or where the theme and subject matter of the manuscripts demonstrates a clear shift in focus. For example, in his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah reported that in 1650 he 'then did give over writing, intending to write no more books having written above forty books and read over the Bible many times and above two hundred other books'. He confessed at this time that 'with the help of God I will strive to practice what I have read and written and to set myself to live to God's glory'. He gave over writing 'til the year 1652' and then he picked it up again in order (as he put it) 'to be more careful over my ways and live more up to God'. He testified to buying a 'book to carry in my pocket wherein I did write my sins and God's mercies'.⁴ The attempt to

³ Paul Seaver has reproduced Nehemiah's entire catalogue with descriptions of the extant manuscripts in *Wallington's World*, (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 199-202. David Booy also discusses the dates and numbers of the notebooks in *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618-1654*, (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), p. 263, fn. 1. In his discussion, Booy identifies manuscript no. 26 in Nehemiah's list, or *The growth of a Christian* (TP MS 68.20), which is missing from Seaver's reproduction of the list. See Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 7-8, 263. G. E. Aylmer had previously identified manuscript no. 26 in 1986. See David Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 215 and G. E. Aylmer, 'Collective Mentalities in Mid Seventeenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Presidential Address, 22 November 1985. Excerpts from Nehemiah's manuscripts were also published in the nineteenth century. See Nehemiah Wallington, *Historical Notices of Events Occurring Chiefly in the Reign of Charles I*, Rosamond A. Webb ed., 2 Vols., (London, 1869).

⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 188 – 201. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 295 – 296.

keep a daily record of sins was actually something Nehemiah had practiced for many years, dating back to his earliest attempts at writing at the age of eleven in 1609.⁵

From 1609 to 1632, identified here as the early period, Nehemiah composed five manuscripts that mainly dealt with his personal struggles with piety, his temptations to commit suicide, and painful family experiences. The one manuscript that survives from this period is 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance', which he wrote in from 1618 to as late as 1641. He began this period by writing in a manuscript that he started in 1609, but subsequently lost. After losing this initial manuscript, nine years would pass before he started writing again, in 1618. Wallington discontinued the 1618 manuscript, because, in his words, he had 'not written in it to my liking'.⁶ One year later, in 1619, he commenced writing his earliest extant, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance'. He would continue to write in this until the mid 1630s.⁷ In the early to mid 1630s, he then started two more manuscripts that were mainly comprised of passages of Scripture. He only provided a title for one of these additional notebooks, 'The Widow's Mite'.⁸ The other manuscript he described simply as, 'Another book with places of holy Scripture, which I gather against all manner of sins in 1622'.⁹

The second period in Nehemiah's writing, the prolific period, dates from 1632 to 1650. Five manuscripts have survived from this period, 'A Memorial of Gods Judgments upon Sabbath Breakers, Drunkards and Other Vile Livers'; 'A Bundle of Mercies; The Growth of a Christian'; 'A Record of Mercies Continued or yet God is Good to Israel'; and 'Copies of Profitable and Comfortable letters'. While in the first

⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267. A fuller discussion of the different styles and methods of writing will be the subject of chapter two of this thesis.

⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

⁷ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

⁸ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

⁹ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, p. 199.

period Nehemiah had produced five manuscripts in twelve years (not counting the notebook that he started and lost in 1609), from 1632-1650, an eighteen-year period, he wrote thirty-eight.¹⁰ This astonishing production is magnified even more when one considers the physical dimensions of each manuscript. Depending on the paper size (whether a quarto or folio), the average length of one manuscript was approximately 200 - 500 folios. Therefore, during this period of writing, a low estimate would have Nehemiah having composed more than 7,000-8,000 folios of material. With the exception of 'The Growth of a Christian', the extant manuscripts from this stage of his writing are filled with reflections and pietistic applications drawn from political and other current events, which he witnessed, heard about, or read in books and news pamphlets.¹¹

In the final years of his writing, from 1652 to 1654, Nehemiah wrote five manuscripts. Only one of these manuscripts has survived, 'An Extract of the Passages of my Life, or the Book of all my Writing Books'. As stated above, two years elapsed between the last manuscript in his prolific middle period and the manuscript he started in 1652. He would begin another manuscript in 1652, two more in 1653, and a final notebook in 1654.¹² Wallington started his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all my Writing Books' either in the later months of 1653 or the early months of 1654.¹³

¹⁰ Other than the list of manuscripts with dates provided at the back of his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah discusses these manuscripts in FS MS V.a.436, fols. 30 – 178. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 274-295.

¹¹ The size of paper in Nehemiah's manuscripts was not different than the ones Nehemiah would have encountered in the printed books he read, an aesthetic that becomes important considering his purpose in writing, which is discussed in chapter two of this thesis. On the comparison of paper size in manuscripts with printed books, see Mark Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, (Malden, MA: Wiley – Blackwell, 2010), p. 68.

¹² FS MS V.a.436, fols. 194, 199, 200, 201. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 297-298. Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 201-202.

¹³ The complexities of dating this manuscript are discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

The richness of Nehemiah Wallington's manuscripts, and the invaluable window they offer into the life of a seventeenth century individual, has inspired two notable books, Paul Seaver's *Wallington's World* (1985), and, more recently, David Booy's *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618 - 1654* (2007). Both Seaver and Booy focus on the impact of Puritanism on Nehemiah's mind. The word 'Puritan', for Nehemiah, was a term that he applied to the religious group of which he considered himself a member. For example, on one occasion, Nehemiah refused the Devil's temptation to commit suicide by stating that he did not want others to say, 'Look on these Puritans: See Master Wallington's son hath killed himself and so I should bring a slander upon our religion'. He confessed that the thought of bringing shame on the name of 'Puritans' caused him to fall 'out a weeping' and to throw away the knife that he was attempting to kill himself with.¹⁴ In another place, Nehemiah identified the 'Puritans' as a group that stood in opposition to 'our lordly Bishops and prelates with many other learned men'. According to Nehemiah, these clergymen and scholars that the Puritans opposed also 'caused and move others to hate the dear children of God showing it, by their mocking, taunting, reproaching with scoffs and jeers, and calling them by names of Puritans, schismatical, seditious, Factious, Troublestaites, Traitors that speak against Caesar, with many slanders'.¹⁵ From these passages, Nehemiah seems to have used the term 'Puritan' in much the same way scholars today have come to interpret the term in its late sixteenth and seventeenth century context – as a polemical device deployed to designate one group or type of Protestants from other Protestant groups and Catholics in early modern society.¹⁶ Nehemiah did not convey

¹⁴ GL MS 204, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 35.

¹⁵ BL MS 21935, fol. 39. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 121.

¹⁶ On the definition of 'Puritan' and 'Puritanism', see Patrick Collinson, 'AntiPuritanism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 19 – 30.

what specific religious doctrines or beliefs that he believed constituted a ‘Puritan’ or were indicative of Puritanism. His own religious beliefs and understanding of Protestant theology are complex and dynamic; they evidence less of an academic or taxonomical approach than his attempt to understand and apply theology to life-experiences. It is, in fact, with Nehemiah’s attempt to understand and apply these beliefs that both Seaver and Booy are concerned. According to Seaver, the purpose of his book was to answer two basic questions: first, to understand ‘what ordinary Englishmen made of the particular kind of Protestantism preached by the godly ministers; and second, to know in particular what a seventeenth-century Londoner made of that message’.¹⁷ The result of Seaver’s analysis is an excellent biography of an early modern individual with deep commitments to Puritanism. Seaver’s work is particularly commendable in that it seeks to avoid significant distortion by relying on Nehemiah’s self-interpretation over time. David Booy’s focus in *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618 – 1654* (2007) is Nehemiah’s deployment of Puritan piety as an attempt to construct a ‘self’. In categorizing Nehemiah’s manuscripts as examples of ‘life-writing’, Booy interprets the manuscripts as revealing ‘Wallington’s bid to live a godly life and to his construction and understanding of a self within the context of seventeenth-century Puritanism’.¹⁸ Booy is most attentive to how Wallington used writing to follow the teachings of godly ministers and to examine and manage a ‘self’ through composition. ‘Where Wallington is concerned, we need to consider not only the kind of self he constructs in his texts, but also how he understands that self, and why he understands and presents it as he does’.¹⁹

¹⁷ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, Preface.

¹⁸ Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Despite different agendas, both Seaver and Booy construe Nehemiah's intense pursuit of personal piety as reflective of an oppressive psychology that was produced mainly by the teachings of Puritan clergy. Of particular interest, for both scholars, is the impact of the Reformed doctrine of election on Nehemiah, or the process whereby he sought assurance of his eternal salvation in Christ.²⁰ For instance, in *Wallington's World* (1985), Seaver interprets Nehemiah's failure to experience conversion in late adolescence as inducing an identity crisis that he would struggle with for the rest of his life.²¹ In *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington, 1618 – 1654* (2007), Booy writes that in Nehemiah's earliest extant manuscript one finds 'the mental distress often engendered by Calvinist doctrines about human corruption and predestination'.²² Seaver and Booy do extend their psychological analysis of Nehemiah's manuscript beyond Puritan theology. In addition to Reformed doctrine, Seaver stresses the psychological dynamics produced by Nehemiah's relationship with his father and older brother as a catalyst for his religious and literary pursuits.²³ Both Seaver and Booy also refer to Nehemiah's motivation to write as an indefinable 'urgency' or 'compulsion'.²⁴ An indicator of this psychological approach is perhaps found in the way that these works influenced readers and reviewers, particularly of Seaver's *Wallington's World* (1985). One reviewer has written that 'Nehemiah Wallington was a kindly soul who could have been aided by a wise psychologist'.²⁵ Another reviewer has derived from Seaver's book evidence of a 'Puritan mentality'.²⁶ What Seaver and those like Booy and other readers who follow him largely ignore in the attention paid

²⁰ Ibid., p. 14.

²¹ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, p. 15. More will be said about Seaver's interpretation of conversion in Nehemiah's manuscripts in chapters four and five of this thesis.

²² Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 19 – 20.

²³ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 11 – 12.

²⁴ Ibid. See also, Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 9.

²⁵ Leland Carlson, 'Book Reviews: Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London', *Church History*, Vol. 55, No. 4, p. 532.

²⁶ Blair Worden, 'Calvinisms', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 23 January 1986.

to Nehemiah's mental processes, however, is a subject that appears throughout his seven extant manuscripts and is arguably something that drove his writing and pursuit of Puritan piety. The thesis that follows here will differ from the interpretations offered by Seaver and Booy by focusing on how Nehemiah's writing and pursuit of personal piety was often fuelled by thoughts and experiences related to the subject of death.

More than simply a record of the mental experiences that may have been produced by his reading of Puritan devotional literature or hearing Puritan sermons, Nehemiah frequently recorded into his seven extant manuscripts stories of death that occurred yards from his home. For example, on Thursday, 11 June 1635, at five o'clock in the morning, a Master Monk of Turners Hall, London, fled from his home and into the street. He wore nothing but a blood-soaked nightshirt and was seen brandishing the very sword he had used to slit his own throat. In panic or hysteria, Master Monk then ran through the streets until he reached the Thames, where he threw himself into the river and bumped his head against a boat docked at St. Botolph's Wharf. Several bystanders were able to drag Master Monk from the water and carry him back to his home where he died a week later.²⁷ The case of Master Monk's suicide was recorded by Nehemiah Wallington into the pages of his manuscript, 'A Memorial of God's Judgments'. It was included among other passages that detailed similar incidents that occurred in the streets of London from 1618 - 1655. Master Monk's dramatic suicide – his dash through the streets and leap into the Thames – took place in the area of St. Botolph's Wharf, only a short walk directly to the south along Philpot Lane, the street in which Nehemiah's residence was located.

²⁷ BL MS 1457, fol. 7. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 98 – 99.

Many of these stories of death that happened just outside Nehemiah's door involved neighbours or personal acquaintances. Eight years after the death of Master Monk, in May 1643, at St. Katherine Cree Church in Leadenhall Street, which lay only three blocks to the north of Nehemiah's home by way of Lime Street, an argument broke out between a Mistress Clark and a Mistress Atkinson. According to the account in Nehemiah's manuscript, the preacher, possibly a Master Thomas Weld who had returned to London from New England in 1641, was preaching a sermon on the need to stay awake in church. Mistress Atkinson had already fallen asleep when Mistress Clark tried to wake her by the 'jogging of her knee in a general manner'. Mistress Clark's actions were taken as rude by Mistress Atkinson who was provoked to call Mistress Clark an 'envious housewife and drunken sow'.²⁸ After the service, Mistress Clark told her husband of the incident, who then reported it to the minister and churchwardens. Mistress Atkinson and her husband were then called before the vestry of the church to account for Mistress Atkinson's comments to Mistress Clark. Master Atkinson told the vestry that Mistress Clark had actually kicked his wife, not jogged her knee, and called Mistress Clark a liar. Nehemiah writes that after this comment the meeting became heated and that Master Atkinson and his wife left 'in a great heat and full of bitterness and with many clamorous words'. On her way out of the churchyard, Mistress Atkinson was heard saying that she wished she might never go home alive and that 'she might never speak more' if Mistress Clark had not indeed kicked her. At that moment, Nehemiah reports that Mistress Atkinson 'sunk down dead and was never heard to speak more...' The proximity of St. Katherine Cree was not the only element of Mistress Clark's and Mistress Atkinson's episode that struck close to Nehemiah's own home. The preacher Thomas Weld had a nephew, James.

²⁸ BL MS 1457, fol. 68. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 102 – 103.

James worked for Nehemiah as a first apprentice, and whom Nehemiah referred elsewhere in his manuscripts as ‘Wells’.²⁹ Nehemiah also states that he was ‘acquainted’ with Mistress Clark and describes her in his manuscript as ‘a good and meek woman’. Another example occurred on one morning in June 1654, just four years before his death, Nehemiah heard that Mistress Swanwick, a ‘good woman’, had died from an illness that caused lameness in her feet. Mistress Swanwick was likely the wife of a draper from Eastcheap, Arthur Swanwick. The lameness caused by the illness that had eventually killed Mistress Swanwick had left her unable to leave her house for seven years.³⁰ That same night Nehemiah also heard that the well-known Presbyterian minister, Jeremiah Whitaker, had died. Master Whitaker had suffered for six months due to gout, colic, kidney stones, and ulcers. Nehemiah writes that after Whitaker died an autopsy was performed and a ‘stone’ that weighed three ounces was removed from his bladder and that his kidneys were ‘full of ulcers’.³¹ In his later years, Whitaker served as minister at St. Mary Magdalen, Bermondsey Street in Southwark.³² Southwark was just across London Bridge and one of the few places outside of his own neighborhood that Nehemiah ventured.

Nehemiah’s collection of stories of death (like the sample provided above) continued until the end of his life. The range of content found in these stories ran from the gory (*a la* Master Monk), to the outrageous (such as the case of Mistress Clark and Mistress Atkinson), to the more sedate (such as with that dealt with well-known ministers like Jeremiah Whitaker and neighbours like Mistress Swanwick).

²⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 12. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 102 n. 28. Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, p. 251 n. 25.

³⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fol.224. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 302 n. 255.

³¹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 224. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 302.

³² J. Fielding, ‘Whitaker, Jeremiah (1599–1654)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

The record of these dismal incidents throughout Nehemiah's seven extant manuscripts revealed the memories and concerns of an individual greatly impacted by the events that took place around him. Wallington consistently painted through these vignettes vivid mental images of a city where life was precarious. Death loomed round every corner, and was the main substance of a scene that he constantly encountered in his comings-and-goings in the streets of London.

More than merely the graphic and shocking visual images of death, Nehemiah also noted the sights and sounds of death. Human mortality was part of Nehemiah's conversations among friends and family members. It also characterized the ambient noises in the background and what he saw from day to day. This was particularly evident in Nehemiah's depiction of the plague in his manuscripts. When the plague struck mightily in London and took the life of many of the City's citizens, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance' that along with his wife and children he heard 'in this doleful city' the ringing of 'bells tolling and ringing out continually'. The bells, however, were not the only reminder of the impact of the plague. Nehemiah states that he witnessed 'coffins going by almost every day' and heard of many acquaintances that died as a result of contracting the disease. He also heard stories of 'whole families' who were swept away, the residents of entire buildings that died, and 'three score children out of one alley and thirty out of another'. He wrote in his manuscript his amazement that he and his family 'should escape' the disaster.³³ The outbreak of plague in the streets of London produced not only the fear of death for Wallington – 'Oh this is terrible and fearful to those that be living' - but also an awareness of the symptoms that accompanied the disease: 'Oh what a great discomfort is this to the visited persons

³³ GL MS 204, fols. 379, 407 – 408. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 54, 57 – 58.

and what increase of fear to those that be well?’ According to the passage recorded by Nehemiah into his manuscript, the disease first filled the infected person’s head with pain and caused stomach-aches. The body then displayed lesions that changed in color from red to blue as death approached, which he described as the ‘banners’ or ‘ensigns’ of a ‘cruel Tyrant’ marking victory over a conquered foe.³⁴

Nehemiah was not exceptionally unique or the victim of an overly morbid imagination in his perception and collection of these stories of death in London’s streets. As evidenced in recent publications on the conditions of life in the City in the seventeenth century, death was omnipresent.³⁵ According to some scholars, the constant threat of human mortality has always characterized existence for Londoners. ‘London has always been lethal’, write David Brandon and Alan Brooke in *London: City of the Dead*. ‘Death was a part of life and Londoners found ways of coping with its pervasive presence just as they managed to handle the other demanding challenges that came their way’.³⁶

Emily Cockayne has demonstrated in her recent publication, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise and Stench in England: 1600 – 1770*, that early modern London was a gloomy, shadowy place.³⁷ Executions at the Tower, noise, unpleasant smells and an overall dreariness from the construction of taller and taller buildings created a dark and melancholic atmosphere. Cramped living spaces within Nehemiah’s own section of the city in Eastcheap were a breeding ground for disease and illness. Immigrants and apprentices moved to the area to begin careers and look for employment, making it a

³⁴ GL MS 204, fols. 378 – 379. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 53. David Booy writes (p. 53 n. 195) that Nehemiah probably copied this passage from an original source but he has been unable to locate it.

³⁵ David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 379 – 380.

³⁶ David Brandon and Alan Brooke, *London: City of the Dead*, (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2008), Introduction.

³⁷ Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England*, (London: Yale Press, 2007), p. 9. London is a constant reference throughout Cockayne’s text.

bustling centre for trade and civic activity, but also the gateway for epidemics from Europe.³⁸ Eastcheap had long been a destination for merchants and artisans ever since the medieval era, but had grown even more crowded as the City assumed a more prominent role in trade and commerce under the Stuart monarchy.³⁹ Ports and fishing docks like St. Botolph's Wharf along the Thames provided a constant stream of visitors and new arrivals. Major governmental buildings filled the landscape from Cannon Street and followed the northern bank of the river toward the Tower, which stood at the eastern end.⁴⁰ These structures would assume a more ominous presence in Nehemiah's lifetime as animosity increased between Crown and Parliament, and between Whitehall and the City fathers toward the end of Charles' I reign.⁴¹ King Charles I would eventually meet his death at Whitehall in 1649, nine years before Nehemiah's own death in 1658.

According to Cockayne, many people in seventeenth-century London bore the marks of death's advance long before the moment of death finally arrived. Life was difficult, and its effects noticeable on the bodies and faces of individuals in the street. Missing teeth, pock-marks, and disfigurements due to constant battles with diseases such as smallpox produced unique and perhaps gruesome appearances. Venereal illnesses such as syphilis were particularly evident in the loss of one's nose and teeth.⁴² The effects of occupation were also apparent. Porters, bakers, and potters often presented in their physical attributes the result of their toil – a curved back, deep wrinkles in the face, stocky legs. Despite the harsh consequences of labor and the toll it took on the body, however, physical deformity did not free a person from

³⁸ Ibid., p. 244.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 158.

⁴⁰ Roy Porter, *London: A Social History*, (London: Penguin Books, 1994), pp. 17 – 18.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 88.

⁴² Cockayne, *Hubbub*, pp. 22 – 31.

contributing to society, at least for men. For women, though, a deformed appearance proved detrimental to social acceptance. A disfigured or unusual appearance for a woman could keep her from marriage. Passing on one's 'ugliness' to proceeding generations through procreation was especially unfavourable to potential suitors. A woman without teeth was depicted in a slightly later publication of the period as bearing 'That smell of Death, and the stink of rotten Gums'.⁴³

Even the common ailment of toothache reminded Nehemiah and his friends of death. As a result of toothache one May, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that he could find little rest 'night or day'. The situation cost him 'about eight shillings', presumably in an effort to fix the problem. The pain from the tooth would subside, but two weeks later return accompanied by headache and fever, which required him to call the doctor. In his manuscript Nehemiah wrote, that the illness 'terrified' him 'very much' and his friends thought he 'should have died'.⁴⁴

The unpleasant odours Nehemiah encountered in the streets were more than the result of merely bad teeth and gums. Londoners often faced a mixture of foul smells that created a psychological fear of 'miasmas', or the belief that deadly diseases were spread by bad air. According to Cockayne, 'Miasmas were thought to drift up from corpses and carcasses, stagnant gutters and ditches, dunghills, privies and any other festering matter'.⁴⁵ Sweat and other by-products of human existence produced distasteful aromas that wafted through the streets due to an ever-expanding multitude. In 1599, Thomas Platter wrote that London was so crowded 'that one simply cannot walk along the streets'.⁴⁶ The swell in London's population had brought serious problems – London was dirty. Dunghills, wild animals, and the

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 30 – 35.

⁴⁴ GL MS 204, fol. 402. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 56.

⁴⁵ Cockayne, *Hubbub*, pp. 206 – 213.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 158.

disposal of urban waste were a serious issue.⁴⁷ The smell of sulphur and rotting carcasses combined with a variety of other scents produced by the workshops and fires of artisans. Gilders and pewterers risked deafness, dumbness, and even paralysis from the fumes created by their work.

The result of this difficult existence in London produced a desire for individuals to find a place to escape from the fears and frustrations of life in the crowded City. Fulfilment of this desire, however, was difficult to achieve. The wealthy were often the only ones that could afford to leave or move to the countryside.⁴⁸ For those who could not flee, it was frequently left to the individual citizen to contribute to the improvement of his or her living conditions. Individual merchants and artisans like Nehemiah Wallington, for example, were responsible for the upkeep of their own home and the proper disposal of waste.⁴⁹ Sweeping in front of one's own lodging was expected. Paving, if it was to be done, was the obligation of local residents.⁵⁰

It was a symptom of the hazards of London life that the desire to create a place of escape or an area of tidiness in the City could in itself lead to a display of death in the streets. On one occasion Nehemiah writes in his manuscripts of an attempt to repair his house. In his efforts to remove a chimney 'because the foundation was not good' he described how not only he and those with him in the house were nearly killed, but also passersby in the street when an entire gable of his house fell, along with all three chimneys in the home. Nehemiah wrote that 'a great deal of timber fell

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 182 – 191.

⁴⁸ Pamphlets that Nehemiah read suggested that this dynamic was often a source of tension. See p. 89 of this thesis on the wealthy fleeing the city in times of plague.

⁴⁹ Cockayne, *Hubbub*, pp. 191 – 195.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 182 – 183.

into the street and one great piece bruised a maid on her savegard, but there was nobody at all hurt'.⁵¹

There was no escape from these difficulties of life in early modern London. The circumstances of others that so interested Nehemiah and found their way into the pages of his manuscripts also impacted him. The same situations that brought the death outside his door in the streets of the City were just as much a reality inside the walls of his own home. He experienced firsthand the dangers of fire, illness, his wife's pregnancies and delivery of children, and recorded those experiences alongside the experiences of his neighbours into his manuscripts. The experience of death in his home was often related to the death of a child; a source of deep sorrow and deep bereavement that was expressed by Nehemiah in his manuscripts.⁵²

The threat of death at home from accidents that involved fire was a common occurrence for Wallington. One evening while he lay in bed with his wife and daughter, Nehemiah fell asleep with a lit candle hanging over his head in a wire candlestick holder. According to his manuscript, he then awoke at one o'clock in the morning from a smarting pain on his head. The candle had fallen through the wire holder and caught his hair on fire. Nehemiah jumped out of bed and put the fire out, grateful that it had not harmed his wife or daughter or caused greater damage to the home by catching the bed on fire.⁵³ On a separate occasion, Nehemiah's daughter, Sarah, and his wife were in Nehemiah's workshop when a heavy cleaver fell from its hold on the wall and nearly struck them. That same day, Sarah sat by a fire, blowing

⁵¹ GL MS 204, fols. 417 – 418. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 61 – 62. See Booy n. 255 on p. 62: a 'savegard' was an 'outer skirt worn to protect other clothes'.

⁵² Nehemiah's expression of deep bereavement in relation to the death of his children runs contrary to the suggestion of Clare Gittings. In *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England*, Gittings writes that due to the frequency of death, the loss of a small child caused little grief to the parents. See *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England*, (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 82.

⁵³ GL MS 204, fol. 421. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 63.

the embers with a pair of bellows. She started to fall into the fire, and would have done so, if it were not for the quick instincts of his wife. Grace quickly pushed Sarah to one side of the fireplace, away from the flames.⁵⁴ While running ‘up and down the house playing’ one day, his son, Nehemiah Jr., stumbled, fell down, and ‘hit his face against the porridge pot and broke the skin of his nose’. The bump against the pot caused his nose to bleed, but worse, as the pot was ‘on the fire,’ his hand ‘flopped’ into the flames and was burned. In his manuscript, the father, Nehemiah, expressed great relief that the pot kept his son from falling completely into the embers. He was particularly grateful that Nehemiah Jr. had not sustained more serious and perhaps even deadly injuries.⁵⁵

Illness rather than accidents, though, was the most common cause of death for Nehemiah’s children. The first threat of death for a child came early in Nehemiah’s marriage to Grace. The incident actually involved two of their children. It was a Tuesday in February and Nehemiah had gone with his family into the country. That night, Elizabeth, Nehemiah’s eldest child, began to feel sick. A week later she was ‘full of measles’. Six days afterward, Nehemiah’s infant son, John, also fell ill with sweat and convulsions. Nehemiah writes in his manuscript that John’s ‘eyes, his mouth, and his hands did work very much: and he did foam at the mouth: and at the going away of the fit, he did cast up the white of his eyes much like one that is dying which was very woeful to the Father and Mother and the rest of the beholders’.⁵⁶ This time, Elizabeth and John would recover from illness, but seven months later, on a weekend in October, illness would strike again. On this occasion, the family had made another trip to the country. ‘Partly for refreshment, and partly to see my sister,

⁵⁴ GL MS 204, fols. 434 – 435. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ GL MS 204, fol. 421. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 63.

⁵⁶ GL MS 204, fol. 404. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 56 – 57.

Sarah,’ wrote Nehemiah in his manuscript. The outing was a ‘merry’ one. Yet, the next evening, back at home, Elizabeth woke her parents in the middle of the night to tell Nehemiah that tomorrow she would go and buy him a plum pie. ‘These were the last words I did hear my sweet child speak,’ as Nehemiah would later recall the events, ‘for the very pangs of death seized upon her’ the next morning. Two days later, at four o’clock in the morning, Elizabeth died. She was three years old.⁵⁷

The threat of death from illness in his home and among his family was unceasing. Shortly after Elizabeth’s death, it was discovered that Grace was pregnant. The pregnancy made her sick, so sick that Nehemiah writes ‘that my Mother, the midwife, the doctor, and others of my friends that did see her they said she would not continue long ‘. Grace did survive, and delivered a child in December, only to fall ill again. Nehemiah’s knowledge of the conditions of life in the streets only added to his anxiety for his wife. He had heard that sixty women who had recently delivered children had died in one week in Shoreditch, a borough of London just to the north of Eastcheap.⁵⁸ To Nehemiah’s great relief, Grace recovered from the recent deliverance of her own child. In March of the following year, however, their son, John, fell ill and this time would not get better. He was very sick, and for a week could not eat or drink anything other than cold beer. Again, as in the record of his daughter Elizabeth’s final hours, Nehemiah demonstrates a tenderness and sensitivity toward his child’s frailty and naïveté by noting John’s own words and phrases. He records in his manuscript his son’s attempts to tell a story to his wife with some of his last words: ‘He then being aware of his Mother (at his bedside) he said, ‘Mame, John fall down opaday: Mame, John fall down opaday’. At the time of his death, John was two years of age.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ GL MS 204, fol. 408-409. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 58 – 60.

⁵⁸ GL MS 204, fol. 410. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 60.

⁵⁹ GL MS 204, fol. 417. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 61.

Nehemiah and his wife would experience the death of two more children, two sons named Nehemiah Jr. and Samuel. Like John, Nehemiah Jr. would die at two years old.⁶⁰

The loss of his children deeply affected Nehemiah. When Elizabeth, his first child, died Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript, 'I forgot myself'. 'For I was much distracted in my mind, and could not be comforted, although my friends speak so comfortably unto me'. His wife tried to console him; she tried to convince Nehemiah that Elizabeth no longer suffered and that they, too, were released from the constant pain and heartache that came with tending to their sick child. Nehemiah recorded his wife's words into his manuscript: 'Do but consider what a deal of grief and care we are rid of, and what a deal of trouble and sorrow she is gone out of'.⁶¹ Elizabeth's death, however, would be the first of several similar and difficult experiences for Nehemiah.

The only child to survive out of five children born to Nehemiah and Grace would be a daughter, Sarah. Sarah would go on to marry and have children of her own. The dangers of early modern life in London, however, would persist into Sarah's home as well. On 22 April 1654, just four years before his death, Nehemiah's grandson and child of Sarah and John Houghton, died. Once again Nehemiah would express deep anguish in his manuscript over the loss of another loved one.

This was some grief to my spirit, so that I find it very hard to praise God for taking from me as giving unto me. And though I say Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven, it is coming not from my heart, conscience tells me I lie; my comfort is that God accepts my desires in his Christ.⁶²

⁶⁰ GL MS 204, fols. 421 – 422. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 63 – 64.

⁶¹ GL MS 204, fol. 409. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 59.

⁶² FS MS V.a.436, fol. 213. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 301.

Based on the tragic events of his childhood, perhaps Nehemiah should have been better prepared to cope with the deaths of his children and grandchildren. The difficult existence expressed in his manuscripts about life in early modern London had made an impact in his life from the very beginning. By the year of his birth in 1598, Nehemiah's parents, John and Elizabeth, had already experienced the death of at least four children.⁶³ Before the age of fifteen, he had lost his biological mother, a stepmother, as well as three stepsiblings. He would eventually survive all but four of his thirteen siblings. There is a question, however, as to what degree these early deaths affected him. Nehemiah offered little commentary or personal reflection on the experience of death in his home from this time in his manuscript. This differs from his account of death in the streets of London that occurred in and around his own home later in life.

His mother's death was particularly brutal, but Nehemiah presented no personal recollection of the pain and heartache her death may have caused him. At the time of her death in 1603, Nehemiah was five years old. He would later copy into his earliest extant manuscript ('A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance') the details of his mother's death from a document obtained from his father. He did not disclose why his father gave him this document, or why he decided to copy it into his manuscript. Nevertheless, the text of the record (as found in Nehemiah's manuscript) described how Elizabeth had suffered for more than a year from internal injuries incurred from the birth of her fourth child in six years and her twelfth in twenty years of marriage.⁶⁴ It also stated that Elizabeth had always been sickly, even before the demands of motherhood and domesticity that the delivery of

⁶³ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 68 – 70. See also GL MS 204, fol. 475, where c. 1641 Nehemiah wrote that most of his siblings were dead. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 88.

⁶⁴ GL MS 204, fol. 474d. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 88.

her last child proved too much. The strain of childbirth for the thirty-nine year old woman had caused temporary paralysis in her arms and legs, as well as extreme blood loss. The paralysis was so great that she had to be ‘carried to her bed’.⁶⁵ Because of his lack of personal commentary, the impression all this made on the young Nehemiah is impossible to discern. Yet, according to the document, in her final days, Elizabeth made a determined effort to influence her children through personal interaction. Even when bedridden from pain and paralysis, the document states that she spoke with her children, and advised them on how to live and cope with illness and death.⁶⁶ An additional reference to the relationship with his mother does exist in Nehemiah’s manuscripts. This reference is found in his last extant manuscript ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of All My Writing Books’, written toward the end of his life. At the start of that manuscript, Nehemiah wrote to ‘have heard’ from others that from his birth ‘to the year 1603 (which was the year my Mother died) I was a very forward and disobedient childe, which was a grief to my tender parents’.⁶⁷ Any direct reflections on how her death personally impacted him, however, remain absent.

For whatever reason, the absence of any personal commentary in relation to his mother’s death was also reflected in his experiences of the death of other family members from his childhood. Nehemiah wrote nothing of the early death of his first stepmother, Joan Hinde, who died in the early summer of 1605. Likewise, he wrote nothing of the death of his two stepsiblings, Alice and Richard Harrison. Alice and Richard had died from the same illness that killed Nehemiah’s other stepsibling and

⁶⁵ GL MS 204, fols. 474a-474d. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 86-88. As these particular pages in Nehemiah’s manuscript are unnumbered, I follow the pagination provided by Booy.

⁶⁶ GL MS 204, fol. 474c. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 87.

⁶⁷ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 1. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 266.

favourite childhood companion, Philip Hinde, in the autumn of 1609.⁶⁸ It was Philip's death that prompted Nehemiah's more intimate expressions regarding the impact of death in his childhood. Unlike his silence in regards to the death of his stepmothers and other stepsiblings, Nehemiah expressed in his manuscript the same level of personal anguish found in response to the deaths of his children later in life. This response occurred when, in an effort to quarantine and keep Nehemiah from contracting the illness that killed Philip, he was sent to stay with his grandmother in Bishopsgate. While there, Nehemiah described in his manuscript how he went into the garden and kneeling down under the arbor 'prayed to the God of Heaven'. 'I remember it well' he wrote, 'how I poured out my soul to God, with tears, my heart was enlarged'. He felt 'elevated', closer to heaven, and this brought him 'much comfort'.⁶⁹

The death of his stepbrother and favourite childhood companion, Philip Hinde, in 1609, marked a turning point in Nehemiah's life. According to his manuscript, it 'was as I remember the first time that ever I prayed in private myself'. He wrote in his manuscript how the loss of Philip propelled him to 'reform' his life and attempt to 'be better'. It was also the time Nehemiah began 'to write down' his sins. He would give the practice of writing over for a while, but return to it again along with a vigorous appetite for Reformed Protestant piety and reading. Over the next seven years after Philip's death Nehemiah's father and older brother gave him 'many good books', which included his first Bible and a copy of John Brinsley's *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615).⁷⁰ This seemed to support and encourage a pattern that Nehemiah would adopt for the rest of his life. Nehemiah began to cope and seek to understand death

⁶⁸ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 68 – 69.

⁶⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 3 – 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 266 – 267.

⁷⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 4 – 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

more and more through a piety that included voracious reading and writing habits. The stories of death in the streets of London and the experience of death in his home from early childhood continued right unto the end. Nehemiah, however, would survive in such a difficult environment until sixty years of age. Four years before his death in 1658, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that he had heard of a ‘woman near her death that said she had all the world she would now give it for the assurance of the love of God, nay for one glimpse of God’s favor. For now saith she all that ever I did in my life is presented before me. All my sins that ever I committed do I now see which is a terror to me’.⁷¹ In reflection upon this news, Nehemiah penned,

This puts me in mind now to make my peace with God; now to get the assurance of the love of God; now get the pardon of my sins; now to get assurance that Christ is mine and I am his. That so when death comes I may have nothing more to do but to go into my Father’s bosom.⁷²

With the death of Philip at eleven years of age in 1609, Nehemiah had commenced upon a spiritual journey that would last the rest of his life, and which often involved his consideration of the purpose of those dramatic scenes of death that frequently occurred round him. Many of these scenes of death became reflected in his own existence. Just as Master Monk surrendered to the temptation of suicide and the violent destruction of his own life, Nehemiah, too, considered the option of self-murder eleven times.⁷³ Illness, plague, and the fear of sudden death from an impious life such as that revealed in the stories of funeral processions and the tale of Mistress

⁷¹ FS MS V.a.436, p. 213. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 301.

⁷² FS MS V.a.436, p. 213. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 301.

⁷³ A fuller discussion of Nehemiah’s suicide attempts is the topic of chapter four of this thesis.

Atkinson also confronted Nehemiah on the long road from spiritual despair to the peaceful resolve to ‘welcome death’.⁷⁴

The spiritual journey Wallington travelled was not easy. After a period of great anguish that lead him to consider suicide in the early 1620s, he described his spiritual journey in the manuscript ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance’ as ‘uneven’: God’s children find ‘in their lives that they are so off, and on, so out and in, now in good frame, but by and by sensibly distempered, and altogether unlike themselves’.⁷⁵ He had learned from experience that his spirituality could lead him to great mental and emotional highs, as well as great mental and emotional lows. ‘Sometimes so strong in faith that we can overcome the greatest dangers: and with Peter can walk upon the swelling waves, by and by so faint and brought to so low an ebb that we fall down even in far lesser dangers’.⁷⁶ For Wallington, to cope with death through religious beliefs proved just as precarious as bodily health in early modern London.

The ups and downs of Nehemiah’s spiritual journey and his frequent meditations on death as evidenced in his manuscripts were often a cause for concern. Many of his loved ones worried over Wallington’s state of mind and whether or not he should be left alone. As a bachelor, living alone for the first time, Nehemiah’s father requested that he hire an apprentice to live with him.⁷⁷ The family minister, Henry Roborough, formed a friendship with Nehemiah that involved personal, one-on-one counsel. This friendship with Roborough also sparked a life-long correspondence through letters that Nehemiah kept and added to his manuscript, a

⁷⁴ GL MS 204, fol. 509. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, 96. This passage was probably written sometime after 1635 (possibly as late as 1641; there is an entry for August 1641 on p. 470 of the manuscript) under the heading ‘My postscript to my loving wife, children, and friends’.

⁷⁵ GL MS 204, fol. 266. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 52.

⁷⁶ GL MS 204, fol. 266. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 52.

⁷⁷ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 12. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 270.

collection of letters, entitled 'Copies of Profitable and Comfortable Letters'.⁷⁹ Yet, even the influence and close contact with others was not enough. The ups and downs of Nehemiah's spirituality, however, also demanded from him a certain level of verbal reassurance for those whom he loved and loved him. He expressed this reassurance through his writing in a passage possibly written at the end of his life.

For as much as sudden death befall diverse in these days and it may befall me as well as others: yet I would have you know that Death will not be sudden unto me: for it is that I desire, expect and look for although I am not so prepared for it as I should. And for as much as many are overcome (through the <violent> temptations of Satan) to lay violent hands on themselves: and because I have many sorrows, and am weak, and sometimes I am out of the way you are fearful of me, for I have sometimes violent temptations of Satan. But when I consider <all> (how God hath kept me) and his promise unto me that no temptation should lay hold on me more than I am able to bare, but will give an [essue] with the temptation I would have you know that stronger is he that is with me then all that is against me.⁸⁰

By the end of his life, Nehemiah had grown more confident in his religious beliefs, and with that confidence came the courage to live in a world where death was a constant threat. His passion for personal piety, reading, and writing had become tempered by a desire to engage his life with others. In one of the last entries from his last extant manuscript written in December 1654, Nehemiah wrote in anticipation of a new year and in reflection on the state of his religious life:⁸¹

And now the day, the week, the month and the year, this book, nay my very life all draws to an end. Oh that I could make an end of this old year well and begin the New Year better. I mean in holiness of life and conversation, and as for buying any more books to write in I am resolved to buy no more because I have often said it and have also written that I will write no more books.⁸²

⁷⁹ GL MS 204, fols. 7 – 8. BL MS 922, fols. 118 -126. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 240 – 247 and 270.

⁸⁰ GL MS 204, fol. 505. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 94 n. 47.

⁸¹ Nehemiah is referring to the new year that began on 1 January, not 25 March. Therefore, he was using the old Roman calendar, as did Samuel Pepys, and not the Civil or Legal Calendar. On the use of the Julian and Roman calendars, see Mike Spathaky, *Old Style, New Style Dates and the change to the Gregorian Calendar*, <http://www.cree.name/genuki/dates.htm>. See also *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, Tuesday, 31 December 1661.

⁸² FS MS V.a.436, fol. 537. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 342.

Nehemiah purposed to buy no more books or write as much, but did not intend ‘to give over the works of Examination, nor any holy duty, nor altogether my writing’.⁸³ From then, until his own death four years later, Nehemiah was determined to live with virtue in a difficult existence through an inner strength he trusted was supplied through faith in Christ. The last words of his final extant manuscript read:

God hath given me an heart to resolve to be for him and to walk close with him in holiness of life, but I am Jealous of my weak nature, and my deceitful heart; therefore, I will with God’s help out of myself and by Faith suck virtue from Jesus Christ to enable me who saith without him I can do nothing.⁸⁴

Central to the aims of this thesis is how Nehemiah Wallington, an early modern Protestant, responded to these constant displays of and experiences with death. It is a project sparked by an interest in Nehemiah not only as a non-clergyman who left behind an enormous amount of personal records, but also as an individual who stood at the intersection of significant religious and ideological changes in England. Many of these religious and ideological changes revolved round the topic of human mortality, which, in the late medieval and early modern world, revealed concerns related to the individual’s relationship with society, virtue, and the self.

Some have argued that one of the greatest impacts of the Reformation upon English society, imbued and undergirded by Catholic theology and ritual, was the shift from a more cohesive and connected commonweal to a society driven more by personal doctrinal preferences that centred on conversion and the experience of immediate transition into Heaven after the death of the body. The result of this shift, according to proponents of this theory, was the spread of a religious psychology that generated isolation, and, in some cases, madness and the privatization of spiritual

⁸³ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 537. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 342.

⁸⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 538. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 349.

devotion that brought a decline in the promotion of the public good.⁸⁵ These isolating and privatizing tendencies generated by Protestantism are seen by some as the result of a jettisoning of the doctrines of purgatory and the rituals of the late medieval Catholic church by which communities and individuals in late medieval society are believed to have found comfort and maintained closer ties with one another. For example, in *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992) and *The Voices of Morebath* (2001), Eamon Duffy counters the arguments made by early modern historiographers whom he believes have distorted the value of the late medieval church in England. For Duffy, the Reformation violently disrupted the centrality of a liturgy and so-called obsession of death in the church of the later Middle Ages where a theology of purgatory inspired community and the production of artistic possessions.⁸⁶ In *The Voices of Morebath* (2001), Duffy especially delineates how in following the life of a sixteenth-century country priest named Sir Christopher Trychay the ‘progress of the Reformation inexorably dismantled the structures of Morebath’s corporate life, and pillaged its assets’.⁸⁷ Duffy accepts the argument that the subject of death was of utmost concern for the church of the later Middle Ages. For Duffy, a broad concern and focus on death shaped the organization of the late medieval church is evidenced ‘because belief in the supreme efficacy of the Mass in relieving the pains of those in Purgatory had fuelled an enormous inflation of the number of priestly ordinations’.⁸⁸ A deep concern for death, though, not only served to attract young men to the

⁸⁵ See Christopher Hill in *Society and Puritanism*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1964), p 271, and R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, (London: J. Murray, 1926). The roots of this theory were spearheaded by the work of Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Rise of Capitalism*, Peter Baehr and Gordon Wells, trans., (London: Penguin Books, 2002). See also, John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the literature of religious despair*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 1 – 14.

⁸⁶ Eamon Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, (London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. xxxii-xxxvii, 4-6, 11-15.

⁸⁷ Eamon Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, (London: Yale University Press, 2001), *Preface*.

⁸⁸ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 301.

ministry, it also shaped the 'physical surroundings of worship because belief in the efficacy of good works, and above all of gifts to adorn churches or beautify the worship of God, led to a massive channelling of resources into the decoration or rebuilding of churches, chapels, and colleges in the later Middle Ages'.⁸⁹ On the surface, therefore, according to Duffy, what may have appeared like an obsession with human mortality in the late medieval church could also be viewed as the pragmatic attempt to transform the morbid fears and anxieties among the laity to a 'vigorous (and energetic) relish for life.'⁹⁰ The bottom line for Duffy is that a concern for death in late medieval society was directed by the church in ways that promoted social harmony, the continuation of the church, and an appreciation for beauty in an evanescent world. It was an effort to provide constancy, stability and goodwill in a world that Jesus himself had told his followers was perishing. Duffy summarizes his interpretation of this effort in the following passage

If it is true that much of the religious activity of the period had death and the other world in mind, it is also true that the thought of mortality was endlessly harnessed by preachers and dramatists, not to call people away from social involvement but to promote virtue and sociability in this world. The cult of intercession for the dead can be seen as an incubus dominating the religion of the living, but it makes just as much sense to see it as a means of prolonging the presence of the dead within the community of the living, and therefore as the most eloquent of testimonies to the permanent value of life in the world of time and change.⁹¹

The calming of fears in the face of death was particularly the message that late medieval Catholics were to find in the celebration of the Mass and the attempt to lessen one's stay in purgatory through the practice of good works. As Diarmaid

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 302

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 303. This is a refutation of Johan Huizinga's famous quip regarding late medieval society, that 'no other epoch has laid so much stress as the expiring Middle Ages on the thought of death', and A. N. Galpern's assertion that 'Catholicism at the end of the Middle Ages was in large part a cult of the living in the service of the dead'. See Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, (London: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 145 - 146 and A. N. Galpern, 'The Legacy of Late Medieval Religion in the Sixteenth-Century Champagne', *The Pursuit of Holiness*, C. Trinkaus and H. Oberman eds., (London: Brill, 1974), p. 149.

⁹¹ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 303.

MacCulloch has argued, the Mass and those practices that surrounded the doctrines of purgatory in the late medieval church had the effect of calming fears of a violent death and what lay ahead in the afterlife.⁹² These rituals, though, were not only to provide comfort for the believer, but for the benefit of the entire community. It was in and through the Mass, writes Eamon Duffy, that medieval Christians, ‘as kneeling congregations raised their eyes to see the Host held high above the priest’s head at the sacring, they were transported to Calvary itself, and gathered not only into the passion and resurrection Christ, but into the full sweep of salvation history as a whole’.

Quoting from a medieval primer, Duffy continues, ‘The body of Christ greeted as “journey-money for our pilgrimage, solace of all our longing”, was the focus of all the hopes and aspirations of late medieval religion’.⁹³ Added to the Mass, was then the hope that good works might lessen your time in purgatory. While in practice, as Ralph Houlbrooke states, ‘very few Christians could hope to escape purgatory altogether’, the individual could nevertheless ‘construct their own humble imitations of the mercy of God in good works’ and perhaps shorten their own stay in purgatory. Also, in contributing to the upkeep of hospitals, giving money to beggars, or providing in their wills the funds to help village pay taxes to the king, the individual could quicken their way to heaven. The obvious by product of this was not only an individual need for comfort, but also the promotion of the common good.⁹⁴

According to Ralph Houlbrooke in *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750* (1998), the Mass and those pietistic practices that surrounded the late medieval church’s teachings on purgatory were the first things to come under attack after the English Church’s break with Rome. Houlbrooke argues that, for Protestants,

⁹² Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 17 – 18.

⁹³ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 91.

⁹⁴ Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 36.

upon the death of the body, the individual proceeded to either heaven or hell.⁹⁵ In *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1991), Keith Thomas asserts that, for many early modern Protestant clergy, the practices and doctrines associated with purgatory were perceived to blur the distinction between superstition and true religion. According to Thomas, the jettisoning of these beliefs and the pietistic practices left a vacuum for those lay individuals who still longed to relate to supernatural power in face of death. Without the meditational function of the Mass or the cult of the saints, Thomas suggests that many individuals were left with no way to cope with death and the fears prompted by life in an unpredictable world – ‘the fluctuations of nature, the hazards of fire, the threat of plague and disease, the fear of evil spirits, and all the uncertainties of daily life’. Those ‘technical remedies’ offered in the rituals of the late medieval church that were believed to offer tangible and practical access to the supernatural power that controlled those ‘fluctuations’ were no longer available. In the absence of these ‘remedies’, therefore, Keith Thomas has asked ‘Did [Protestants] have to turn to other kinds of magical control in order to replace the remedies offered by medieval religion? Or was Protestantism itself forced against its own premises to devise a magic of its own?’⁹⁶

The end of certain Catholic rituals and pietistic practices with the advent of the Protestant Reformation did not bring an end to all of the practices and theological assumptions that lay behind late medieval piety.⁹⁷ For instance, the tolling of bells to call the people to pray for the recently departed continued beyond the Reformation in

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 38 – 39.

⁹⁶ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 76 – 77.

⁹⁷ Heiko Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), pp. 21-38. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750*, pp. 69-80.

England.⁹⁸ So too did the view that a violent death was the result of immoral and impious behaviour. Perhaps this latter view had something to do with beliefs that stretched beyond simply late medieval Catholicism. According to some, the belief that a violent death was a consequence of immoral behaviour existed well before even the Middle Ages and is noticeable in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.⁹⁹ One need only think of the various plagues sent by God as a warning to Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt as recorded in the book of Exodus. The ultimate example from the Hebrew and Christian Bible, however, is found in the story of the Passover. Still a vital part of Judaism and seen by many Christian theologians as a typological foreshadowing of the Crucifixion, the Passover story tells of how the firstborn males and animals in a household that did not have the blood of a slain lamb on the main doorframe of their house were mysteriously killed by an angel.¹⁰⁰ Early modern Protestants, including those like Nehemiah Wallington, who were part of what Patrick Collinson has called a ‘potent, catching counter-culture’, received this theology through their emphasis on the Bible.¹⁰¹ This is not to say that differences in regards to such theology did not exist across religions. By the end of the Later Middle Ages, Islam had come to view instances of epidemic and plague as something sent directly from God for the humiliation and joy of believers and the punishment of infidels; Eastern Christianity viewed such instances as something sent for general punishment from God for heresy and unorthodox belief in a pluralistic society; the Roman dominated West looked both inward at the internal or secret sins of the soul and

⁹⁸ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, pp. 39 and 58. See also in the manuscript of Wallington, GL MS 204, fol. 407. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 57.

⁹⁹ William Naphy and Andrew Spicer, *The Black Death: A history of plagues, 1345-1730*, (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001), pp. 13-26.

¹⁰⁰ Exodus 7 – 12.

¹⁰¹ Patrick Collinson, ‘Puritanism as Popular Religious Culture’, *The Culture of English Puritans 1560-1700*, Christopher Durston and Jaqueline Eales eds., (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 1996), p. 56.

outward for meaning in the workings of Providence that was believed to have sent the disease.¹⁰² Sixteenth and seventeenth century Protestants in England, therefore, may have dispensed with the rituals and practices of the late medieval church, but the roots of that theology, which were bound up in Holy Scripture and supported and inspired those rituals and practices, persisted in the books and sermons of Puritan clergy. It was certainly evident, for example, in the following exhortation from a collection of sermons that were preached and later printed by the well-known London minister, William Gouge. In reflection upon those events that brought death like an outbreak of plague, war, or famine, Gouge directed his audience in *God's three arrows: plague, famine, sword* (1631) to notice that 'When we see any judgment hanging over our heads or feel it fallen upon us, (it should cause us) to search narrowly and thoroughly after the cause of that judgment. Nothing doth usually bring men's sins to mind and memory, as judgments'.¹⁰³ Of course, none of this is to suggest that medieval Catholics and early modern Protestants understood God's judgment of death as something that only occurred in violent and/or catastrophic ways; death was also viewed as the result of the body's natural decay.

The most common ideas and theological assumptions that lingered beyond the late medieval period were probably those represented by the *danse macabre* and *ars moriendi*. Through woodcuts, paintings, and other artistic forms, the message of the *danse macabre* was that death was the inevitable result of the human body's perishable quality. The *danse* did this by showing an individual, full of life, dancing with its double; the double, however, was a ragged and rotting shell of its more flourishing and vivacious twin. Duffy describes the 'imaginative power' of the *danse*

¹⁰² Naphy and Spicer, *The Black Death: A history of plagues*, pp. 23-26.

¹⁰³ William Gouge, *God's three arrows: plague, famine, sword in three treatises. I. A plaster for the plague. II. Dearth's death. III. The Church's conquest over the sword*, (London, 1631), p. 6.

as ‘that extraordinary and chilling portrayal of the universal power of death, in which pope and emperor, knight and peasant, lawyer and merchant, sergeant-at-law and monk, all find themselves confronted with a grinning corpse, not the abstract image of Death, but the image of themselves as they are soon to be’. Similar to Duffy’s interpretation of those ritualistic practices and doctrines that surrounded the late medieval church’s teachings on purgatory, the point of the *danse* was to inspire an appreciation for life. Duffy writes that ‘it would be quite mistaken to see in this simple nihilism or even pessimism’: the depiction of ‘the inescapable fate of all flesh’ to succumb to power of death in the *danse* had the affect of causing even those with the most wretched of lives to ‘draw back from death’; the visible reminder that all people die ‘made even the relentless toil of the farm labourer seem desirable’. Yet, more than merely persuading its audience to love life for life’s sake, or expressing an ‘articulation of despair’ out of the awareness of life’s unavoidable end, in Duffy’s estimation the great lesson of the *danse* in hands of ‘religious and moral teachers’ was ‘the need to prepare for death while there was still time’: the *danse* offered clergymen a vehicle ‘to persuade the laity of the transience of earthly pleasures and goods, and the need to seek eternal salvation at all costs’.¹⁰⁴ For those who failed to heed this message, or for those who did but still approached the hour of their death with great horror and dread in the fifteenth century, there remained the ‘immensely influential’ tract known as the *Ars Moriendi*, or the *Art of Dying*. The purpose of this compilation of pastoral and conciliatory sayings was to remind the individual that there was still time to repent. Through examples of ‘great sinners who had by reliance on the cross become great saints’ the individual could still confess their sins and place their trust in the propitiating act of Jesus by his death on the Cross. This was manifest

¹⁰⁴ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 303 – 305.

in the following passage taken from an abridged version of the tract that was available in England:

Put all thy trust in his passion and in his death, and think only thereon, and none other thing. With his death mettle thee and wrap thee therein... and have the cross to fore thee, and say thus; - I would will thou art nought my God, but thou art imagined after him, and makest me have more mind of him after whom thou art imagined. Lord, father of heaven, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, thy son, which is here imagined, I set between thee and my evil deeds, and the desert of Jesus Christ I offer for that I should have deserved, and have nought.¹⁰⁵

The intent of the *Ars Moriendi*, however, was to provide more than just comfort out of the idea that there was time to repent, it was also to move the individual to prepare for the hour of their death through a mindset shaped by religious devotion and spiritual meditation. The message of *Ars Moriendi* acknowledged that death was a fearful and terrifying experience to be endured – indeed, the hour of death was believed to bring about one of the greatest, if not the greatest, spiritual struggles of the person’s life. To prepare for such a momentous and incredibly trying event, the *Ars Moriendi* was meant to assist the individual to meet that experience with the skills and spiritual mastery of an artist. The tradition of the *Ars Moriendi* continued into the early modern era among Protestants. In *A salve for a sick man* (1638), William Perkins also encouraged preparation for death, but argued that the practices offered by the late medieval Catholic Church, such as sacramental prayer, the Mass, and extreme unction, had no basis in Scripture. He expressed an awareness of the impact of death upon community, but, in contrast to the late medieval church, simply advised the individual to confess those sins that were particularly troubling. Above all, he

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 315.

exhorted the dying to forgive others, to seek forgiveness, and to ensure that his or her family would be well provided for after death.¹⁰⁶

Protestant theologians in sixteenth and seventeenth century England also inherited ethical theories of virtue in the face of death from the medieval world that relied heavily upon classical philosophy. As Alexandra Walsham states in her discussion of early modern Protestantism and the doctrine of Providence, ‘the teachings of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics were of considerable influence in shaping the monotheistic theology of the primitive and medieval church’.¹⁰⁷ The influence of Aristotle, especially, would have directed those who, from fear of death, shrank from engaging with their life in the world to pursue virtue and the good of society.¹⁰⁸ According to Aristotle, happiness was not a momentary state of being or consciousness related to the pleasant conditions of one’s circumstances or hope of a better existence in the afterlife; happiness consisted in action, in the virtuous display of character over time which benefitted not only the soul or psyche of the individual, but also society.¹⁰⁹

Margo Todd has stressed that the persistence of classical philosophy in the curricula of English Protestant clergy at Cambridge and Oxford in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was inspired by the writings of Erasmus and the attractiveness

¹⁰⁶ William Perkins, *A salve for a sick man, or, a treatise containing the nature, differences, and kinds of death: as also the right manner of dying well*, (London, 1638 ed.), pp. 84 – 108, 191 – 194. See also Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750*, pp. 159 – 160.

¹⁰⁷ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 328.

¹⁰⁹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, J. A. K. Thomson trans, (London: Penguin Books, 2004 edition), Book I.vii. 1097b, 8-11, p. 14,

of Renaissance humanism.¹¹⁰ By examining those ‘writings which conditioned the way puritans used Scripture by looking at their library catalogues, their commonplace books and correspondence, and (most importantly) the curriculum to which they devoted their university years’, Todd has argued that ‘for at least the century and a half after Erasmus’ death (in 1536), puritan readers were entirely typical of their less zealous contemporaries in imbibing large quantities of humanist literature’ that included ‘classical literature, from Aristotle to the Scriptures and the Church Fathers’.¹¹¹ Moreover, according to Todd, these students would have read those classical philosophers not ‘merely for the rhetorical or grammatical principles they might convey, not even solely for their linguistic purity, but for instruction in virtuous and godly living, for answers to practical ethical questions, and for political precepts and directions on civic involvement’. All of this, they collected as ‘commonplaces, as Erasmus had urged’, to support their own pursuit of wisdom, but also ‘for future reference in debate or as a handy guidelines for action’.¹¹² One can only speculate as to how this training in classical wisdom also influenced the way future Puritan clergy sought to educate the layperson sitting in the pew. The notion of classical virtue was certainly detectable even in the theology of those hotter-sort of Protestants like Robert Bolton, who, despite an evangelical Puritanism, declared in a sermon that was eventually published, ‘But the thoughts of every child of God are ordinarily working, for the maintenance and furthering of Gods glory and good causes, for procuring true good to their brethren, especially in spiritual things, for increasing grace in

¹¹⁰ See Margo Todd for a discussion of Cambridge curricula, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 50, 64, 68-71, 80-81. Todd offers a more balanced and nuanced appeal than Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, (Minnesota: Dover Publications, 2001), Introduction. Miller and Johnson argue that the Puritans rejected much of Aristotelian philosophy in following the humanist scholar Peter Ramus. For a discussion of the communal aspect of death during this period see Philippe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, Helen Weaver trans., (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981), pp. 106-110.

¹¹¹ Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order*, p. 61.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 63 – 65.

themselves, and their store of comfort against the day of trial'.¹¹³ The significance of one's life as a virtuous influence in society was a theme echoed throughout the writings of English Protestant biographers such as John Foxe and Samuel Clarke, the purpose of which, as Patrick Collinson has noted, was to emphasize a passion for life and relationships in community rather than purely intellectual knowledge.¹¹⁴

Problems or complications do emerge in conflating the influence of classical philosophy and the Renaissance Humanist movement with the intellectual training of Protestant clergy in sixteenth and seventeenth century England, especially in regards to the pursuit of virtue and engagement with society. For example, the French Humanists Michel de Montaigne and Pierre Charron pursued and advocated the *vita contemplativa*, or the contemplative life. A preference for the *vita contemplativa*, or the contemplative life, was based in the Platonic deference for meditation and reflection over the *vita activa*, or active life, which was characterized by active involvement in society. According to Montaigne and Charron, the *vita contemplativa* meant a 'withdrawal from the crowd' and an avoidance of the active life in the world in order to pursue study and reflection.¹¹⁵ The *vita activa*, according to Montaigne, was often a mask that hid the individual's greed and selfishness and was a to

¹¹³ Robert Bolton, *A discourse concerning the state of true happiness*, (London, 1611), p. 131.

¹¹⁴ Samuel Clarke, *A collection of the lives of ten eminent divines*, (London, 1662); *The marrow of ecclesiastical history*, (London 1650); *The second part of the marrow, in two books*, (Book One, 1650, Book Two, 1652); *The lives of two and twenty English divines*, (London, 1660); *The lives and deaths of such worthies*, (London, 1665); *The lives of the thirty-two English divines*, (London, 1667); *The lives and deaths of most of those eminent persons*, (London, 1675); *The lives of sundry eminent persons*, (London, 1683). See also Patrick Collinson, 'A Magazine of Religious Patterns' An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism', *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History*, Derek Baker ed., Studies in Church History, 14, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977), pp. 223-249; Collinson draws the connection between Aristotelian ethics and Puritan biography from Erasmus and Colet through to the education of Protestant clergy at Oxford and Cambridge.

¹¹⁵ Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in context*, Quentin and James Tully eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 255.

detriment society.¹¹⁶ The Platonic fondness for the *vita contemplativa* stood in contrast to the Aristotelian notion of happiness (*eudaimonia*), which was achieved by moral activity out of one's unique potential to exemplify excellence (*arête*) in the pursuit of a well-lived or good life (*kalos*). The benefits of pursuing a good life, according to Aristotle, were 'self-sufficient', by which he meant 'not what is sufficient for oneself alone living a solitary life, but something that included parents, wife and children, friends and fellow-citizens in general; for man is by nature a social being'.¹¹⁷ For the Renaissance humanists like Montaigne or Charron, if an individual truly desired the health of society it necessitated the separation of his or her private life from public existence. An individual's interaction with society, according to those more interested in the *vita contemplativa*, was only superficial, and a 'loan of the external self to the commonwealth'.¹¹⁸ The well-lived or good life, in other words, was achieved not by moral activity out of one's own unique potential to exemplify excellence in society, but by meditating on excellence (*arête*). A preference for the *vita contemplativa* was certainly not antithetical to Christianity, or even the Bible. The Apostle Paul, in fact, seemed to advise the *vita contemplativa* in his letter to the Philippians: 'Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute; if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things'. Of course, though,

¹¹⁶ Ibid. The *vita activa* was a notion derived from classical philosophy that was often set against the notion of the *vita contemplativa*. The *vita activa* was the realm of an individual's existence where he or she engaged society through work, politics, or other activities. Aristotle's notion of the *vita activa* should probably not be separated from his philosophy of the eternity of the world – the *vita activa*, one's engagement with the world through contributions to society, was a contribution to eternal matters. In contrast to the *vita activa*, the *vita contemplativa* was an effort to participate in eternity without active participation through physical action in society, but through withdrawal and philosophical reasoning. The difference between Aristotle's philosophy of the eternity of the world and Plato's philosophy of an eternity that existed outside the world is a complex argument that continues in philosophy. This is a complex subject that will not be pursued further in this thesis.

¹¹⁷ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 14, Book I.vii. 1097b, pp. 8-11.

¹¹⁸ Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, pp. 255-257.

Paul did add in the very next verse, ‘The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you’.¹¹⁹

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the differences between a Platonic emphasis on the *vita contemplativa* and Aristotle’s emphasis on the *vita activa* is the lives of those who actually attempted to follow these philosophies. Montaigne’s adherence to the Platonic emphasis on the *vita contemplativa* over the *vita activa* was revealed in his decision at thirty-eight years of age (c. 1571) to retire completely from social life, including interactions with his family. Upon doing so, he confined himself to his study, reading, reflecting and composing a commonplace book that would grow, expand, and eventually be published under the title *Essais* (1580). After nearly ten years of solitude and study, Montaigne paid tribute to his appreciation for the *vita contemplativa* by inscribing these words on his bookshelf:

In the year 1571, at the age of thirty-eight, on the last day of February, his birthday, Michele de Montaigne, long weary of the servitude of the court and public employments, while still entire, retired to the bosom of the learned virgins, where in calm and freedom from all cares he will spend what little remains of his life, now more than half run out. If the fates permit, he will complete this abode, his sweet ancestral retreat; and he has consecrated it to his freedom, tranquillity, and leisure.¹²⁰

In contrast to the Platonic example of the *vita contemplativa* exhibited in Montaigne’s retreat from society, an individual whose writings revealed the influence of Aristotelian philosophy and a preference for the *vita activa* was the Puritan theologian, William Perkins. Perkins’ preference for the Aristotelian philosophy that advocated an active life in society was perhaps tempered, but conspicuously evident

¹¹⁹ Philippians 4:8 - 9, *New American Standard Version*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1999).

¹²⁰ Richard Regosin, ‘Montaigne and His Readers’, *A New History of French Literature*, Denis Holler ed., (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 248 – 252.

in his works dedicated to the study of conscience.¹²¹ In the following passage, Perkins seems at once to exhort his reader to pursue virtue out of an obvious Aristotelian framework, but also decries that part of the philosopher's theory he disagrees with.

Lastly, I say that this gift of God, makes a man fit to live well, In which clause standeth the proper effect of Virtue; which is to make those in who it is, to lead their lives well. And by this we are advertised, to take heed of the opinion of Philosophers, concerning some particular virtues. For in their moral discourses, they give both the name and the nature of Virtue to those things, which are either false and counterfeit virtues, or indeed none at all. For example, Aristotle makes Urbanity a virtue, which is indeed a sin, being nothing else, but a dexterity in mocking and descanting upon reens persons and names.¹²²

For Perkins, the inner spiritual life of a Christian was significant, but did not outweigh the moral and social demands he felt were important, too. As one biographer has described Perkins' thought, 'he is at one with the medieval moralists and with such godly pastors as Lancelot Andrewes, George Herbert and Jeremy Taylor in resolve to educate the individual conscience in the way of holiness and to educate the social conscience in the way of justice'.¹²³ In his own life, Perkins exercised influence in society through his writing and teaching; he influenced a generation of clergymen and writers that included William Ames, Paul Baynes, Samuel Ward, and the poet Phineas Fletcher. He was also a husband, father, and friend - attached to that group of esteemed faculty at Cambridge in the late sixteenth century that Peter Lake has

¹²¹ Michael Jinkins, 'Perkins, William (1558–1602)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also, Dewey D. Wallace, 'Polemical divinity and doctrinal controversy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 210 – 211.

¹²² William Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, (1606), pp. 472 – 473. 'Reens' was possibly a variant spelling of 'reans': an agricultural term used in reference to a drainage ditch or furrow. See 'reans' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. However, in other printed texts from the seventeenth century, the term 'reens' also appeared in reference to deer. For example, see Jodocus Cull, *The ancient and present state of Muscovy*, (London, 1698), p. 80. Considering both of these possibilities and the context that Perkins applied the term, it seems 'reens' was a word deployed in order to identify or describe country life, which, in Perkins' estimation, Aristotle viewed as a way of life that lacked virtue.

¹²³ H. C. Porter, *Reformation and reaction in Tudor Cambridge*, (1958), p. 288, quoted in Michael Jinkins, 'Perkins, William (1558–1602)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

referred to as 'a spiritual brotherhood'. This included his 'lifelong friend', Laurence Chaderton, and Richard Greenham.¹²⁴

The main problem that emerges in conflating classical philosophy and the Renaissance Humanist movement with the Puritans is the notion of an identity or a 'self' that could be developed in isolation and apart from society versus an identity or a 'self' that was developed and constructed in intimate connection with society. The theory that early modern people perceived their lives and constructed an identity from an essence or unadulterated 'self', or possessed a 'self' by which an identity was constructed by the influence of culture has been popularized over the last thirty years by Stephen Greenblatt.¹²⁵ Greenblatt has identified the construction of an identity from an essence or pure 'self' as self-fashioning. The term 'self', however, is a complicated, if not misleading term to apply to those individuals who lived and died in the early Stuart era. The modern notion of a 'self' or 'selfhood' did not come into usage in England until around the middle of the seventeenth-century, and even then did not convey a sense of the modern understanding of 'ipseity', individual identity, or 'possessing a self'.¹²⁶ Perhaps more importantly, though, some Protestants would have considered the pursuit of an autonomous, private self-determining existence as the mark of Satan, and an unregenerate individual more concerned with the powers of

¹²⁴ Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 218 – 219.

¹²⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), Introduction. See also Greenblatt, *Shakespearean negotiations: the circulation of social energy in renaissance England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); with Giles Gunn, *Redrawing the boundaries: the transformation of English and American literary studies*, (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992), Introduction; and *Hamlet In Purgatory*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), Prologue. Other scholars have followed Greenblatt. For example, see Margo Todd, 'Puritan self-fashioning: the diary of Samuel Ward', *Journal of British Studies*, 31, (1992), 236-264; David Booy, *Personal Disclosures: An Anthology of Self-writings from the Seventeenth Century*, (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), p. 4; *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway, and Helen Wilcox eds. (London: MacMillan Press, 2000), Introduction.

¹²⁶ Jonathan Sawday, 'Self and Selfhood in the Seventeenth Century', *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, Roy Porter ed., (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 30.

the flesh than the powerful workings of the Spirit. Later in the century, in *Paradise Lost* (1667), Milton would even describe the idea of self-fashioning or ‘self-raised’ as characteristic of the rebellious angels who were cast from heaven.¹²⁷ According to Milton, autonomy from God was the consequence of divine punishment for Adam and Eve for their sin in the Garden. This was the ‘solitary way’ in Milton’s interpretation, prefigured by Adam and Eve as they left the Garden to fashion a new self, apart from their Creator, having lost the more intimate relationship with God in Paradise.¹²⁸ Tom Webster has highlighted this idea as it appears in Puritan soteriology and sanctification. Webster points out that the creative, independent construction of a self, devoid of dependence upon God, would have gone against Puritan beliefs regarding the ‘new man’ – or, in other words, the belief that God, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, recapitulated those traits that were exhibited in the life of Jesus in the life of the believer following baptism.¹²⁹ These ideas were presented to the laity in less complex forms. For example, the popular story that conveyed the early modern Protestant view of self-fashioning as sinful and demonic was something that Nehemiah Wallington knew quite well through the tale of Dr. John Faustus. At a critical point in his life, which will be discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis, Nehemiah confessed to carrying round in his ‘pockets’ a copy of *The history of the damnable life and deserved death of Dr. John Faustus* (1608).¹³⁰ Nehemiah noted in his manuscript at that time that he paid particular attention to the first question of ‘Doct. Faustus to his spirit Mephostophiles.’ According to his manuscript, that question was ‘If that he were a man on earth, as he himself is what he would do to please God?’ Nehemiah

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 30 – 31. See also John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg eds, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), Book XII.641-649, p 317.

¹²⁹ Tom Webster, ‘Writing to Redundancy: Approaches to Spiritual Journals and Early Modern Spirituality’, *The Historical Journal*, 39, 1 (1996), p 40.

¹³⁰ *The history of the damnable life and deserved death of Dr. John Faustus*, (1608).

wrote that Faustus' spirit answered this question with the reply, 'That if he were a man as Faustus was and adorned with the gifts of nature as he had, Even so long as the breath of God were in him, he would humble himself unto his Majesty endeavouring all he could to keep his commandments, praise and glorify him that I might continue in his favour'.¹³¹ In Faustus, members of the laity like Nehemiah Wallington found the story of an individual who was faced with the choice of constructing an identity fashioned by what they could attain apart from God or by religious devotion. Faustus chose to fashion a self based on what he could attain apart from God and reaped the consequence of damnation. It was a frightening tale that certainly struck fear in those readers who were tempted to pursue a life outside of a commitment to godly piety and Christian virtue.

In the chapters that follow, this thesis will try and locate, through a chronological study of the evidence supplied by his seven extant manuscripts, how the ideas and discursive formations briefly sketched above were reflected in Nehemiah's response to death. The approach in this endeavour will not be based in speculative or preconceived notions regarding human nature or human psychology. Great effort has been exerted to see Nehemiah as an individual of his time and context; someone that approached his struggle with the ideas and tools available to him in seventeenth century England. The methodology employed, therefore, will be one that seeks to know better Nehemiah as an historical figure through his own words and those other artefacts that may have influenced him in his contemporary setting - that 'dense layer of signs' that remain for the observer removed by time,

¹³¹ FS LM V.a.436, fol. 45. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 274 – 275.

place, and cultural biases.¹³² Because these signs only offer reflections and intonations of an individual within an historical milieu that cannot be encapsulated or summed up, it is hoped that this thesis will not be viewed as an attempt to offer definitive answers, but as the offering of a new perspective in regards to an immensely passionate and complex individual. The desire is to open up the discussion of Nehemiah's manuscripts for those especially interested in the areas of early modern Protestant autobiography and how lay Protestants like Wallington applied Protestant doctrines to their lives. The questions that will guide this offering are: As an early modern Protestant, a Puritan, how did Nehemiah respond to death in the absence of the Mass and those pietistic practices that surrounded the doctrine of purgatory? Did he engage with society and pursue virtue in relationship with others, or was he simply a mad Calvinist who exhibited the isolating and privatizing tendencies commonly associated with early modern Protestantism? If he did pursue virtue and engagement with society, did he understand and approach that effort by an attempt to fashion a 'self'?

The second chapter will argue that Nehemiah's initial response to death as an eleven-year-old boy, in 1609, prompted his first attempts to write. It was a response that seemed to emerge from an inner urge to keep a record of his thoughts and interpretations of personal experiences, particularly his sins. The urge to write from this early response to death, however, soon gave way to a more focused and intentional effort. More than a diarist, Nehemiah testified in his manuscripts that around twenty years of age he purchased a specific type of composition notebook and

¹³² This methodology is based in the practices associated with New Historicism and the philosophy of Michele Foucault. On New Historicist method, see Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism*, (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 1 – 17. See also, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: an archaeology of the human sciences*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 28 – 49.

would use a particular type of handwriting that was easy to read. He also commented on his early style and method of writing, which entailed copying into his manuscripts places of knowledge and information from the Bible. In addition to the Bible, he would eventually combine information from other books and events in his life that were relevant to the themes and topics that he assigned to a given manuscript. He identified this more intentional approach to writing as the start of those ‘books’ that he catalogued and collected for the remainder of his life. Most important, though, based on the evidence from his manuscripts, Nehemiah appeared to pursue this intentional approach to composition as a way to communicate and to provide the wisdom that he gained from his study and experience with others. He considered the works produced by this pursuit as similar to those printed books that were available for purchase in his day.

The third chapter will argue that Nehemiah’s response to death as an eleven-year-old boy, in 1609, also involved a particular pietistic approach whereby he sought to control the sinful desires and behaviours produced by his body. This was a response based upon an understanding of suffering and affliction in the body as divine punishment for sin. In traditional Christian teaching, controlling sinful desires and behaviours was discussed within the doctrine of mortification. Yet, according to the so-called Calvinist theology of the Puritan theologians that Nehemiah read, mortification was a process that occurred through a particular mindset that accepted those circumstances that brought suffering and pain in the body as the result of God’s paternal love. While later in life Nehemiah came to understand the suffering and affliction of the body that could lead to death as a source of spiritual discipline, early in life he viewed suffering and affliction as the result of his failure to construct an identity or ‘self’ according to a godly pattern. Nehemiah’s early interpretation of

mortification in response to death, in 1609, reflected his view that it was a process that required his own strength and willingness to control sin from within. Seeking to control his sin and construct an identity or ‘self’ based on controlling his sin would ultimately lead to his temptation to commit suicide – to negate his ‘self’.

The fourth chapter will examine how Nehemiah’s initial pietistic response to death – to control the sinful desires and behaviours produced by his body - resulted in at least ten suicide attempts from the spring of 1618 to the spring of 1623.

Nehemiah’s record of his temptations reveals that the enticement of suicide involved more than a personal or individualistic concern for his ‘self’. The record also reveals how he perceived the inability to control his sinful desires and behaviours and construct a godly identity as something that affected and prevented him from properly engaging his life with others. His conscience assaulted his mind with the memories of sins from his past, the present, and the potential for sins in the future - all of which involved his relationships with other people, especially his family. The argument of this chapter will be that the temptation to commit suicide, for Nehemiah, was a temptation to escape the possibility of sin in trying to fulfil those responsibilities and obligations that he believed were required of him in his interactions with those closest to him.

The fifth chapter will demonstrate how Nehemiah moved beyond his temptations after 1623 by a change in his understanding of death. In discovering a view of death primarily through the study of books, Nehemiah came to view death as a power both inside and outside his body, and seemed to focus his attention on death as a kind of teacher. Through vivid, verbal images found in the Bible, he learned to imagine death as a type of sentient being that dwelled in a certain place, and that brought the article/act of death upon an individual as a judgment for sin, according to

God's will. He also learned that God could judge sin by causing the individual to commit a justifiable act of suicide. The possibility of God's judgment in death does not seem to have inspired Nehemiah to prepare for the inevitability of his demise. Instead, through a consideration of the example of the Apostle Paul, and especially of the Apostle's question in Romans 7:24 - 'Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?' – Nehemiah seemed to express the same concern that had plagued him since his initial response to death in 1609: in the face of death, what Nehemiah longed for was a life that conformed to a godly pattern. Through the example and the writings of the Apostle Paul, Nehemiah's manuscripts, particularly his last extant manuscript in 1654, evidence that he had not only moved beyond the temptation to commit suicide, but also found a way to perhaps engage his life with the life of others by relying on Christ to produce that virtue from within.

Finally, in chapter six, the thesis shows how the evidence presented in earlier chapters gives a fresh perspective on Wallington, moving away from what other scholars have interpreted as the psychological effects of Reformed doctrine. It suggests how looking at Nehemiah's response to the ever-constant presence of death, through his reading and method of writing, might contribute to a better understanding of continuity and change in the piety of early modern Reformed Christianity.

So, it is to the beginning of Nehemiah's journey to understand and respond to death that the subject of this thesis now turns. It is a turn that will reveal, in chapter two, how Nehemiah's initial response to death emerged from a psychological urge or compulsion to a more focused and intentional approach to be perceived as a writer.

Chapter Two

‘Many a precious Jewel in the dust and dunghill of my works’: death, piety, and a humble ambition to write

In the later months of 1653 or early months of 1654, Nehemiah Wallington wrote in the prefatory letter addressed ‘To the Christian Reader’ in his last extant manuscript that his purpose for starting that manuscript was to record his efforts at reading ‘over all the works that my hands have written and give a little hint of the chief things what the Books contain’. The inspiration to read over what had become a collection of fifty-manuscripts at that time was, according to his testimony, ‘because some of late hath been earnestly importuning me to print some of my books which I am unwilling and resolved none shall be while I live’. It was not unusual that others were reading Nehemiah’s manuscripts, and giving him feedback. He had probably allowed others to read his manuscripts for some time. He had, in fact, composed entire manuscripts and given them to his wife and sister as gifts over the years.¹ Nevertheless, he confessed in 1653/54 that he was reluctant to have them printed because, in his opinion, his manuscripts were too ‘weak and unperfect, broken and mixed with distempers’. He acknowledged that he had written them out of a godly motivation. ‘It is a truth’, he wrote, ‘the end of my writing was for God’s glory and the good of souls which I question not’. The problem, or at least one of the problems, was that he believed other works coming off the presses were ‘so excellent, far surpassing my

¹ See Nehemiah’s description of manuscripts numbered 11, 14, 33, 34, 47, and 48 in the catalogue of all his manuscripts in FS MS V.a.436, fols. iii - vii. See also Paul Seaver’s reproduction of this catalogue in *Wallington’s World*, pp. 199 – 202. The sister Nehemiah mentions giving a manuscript to in manuscript number 48 was his half-sister Patience. Patience was the only child born from Nehemiah’s father’s third marriage to Alice Harrison. Alice brought two other children with her into the Wallington household when she married John Wallington. Those children were named Richard and Anne. Richard and Anne died in 1609 from the same illness that took the life of Nehemiah’s other stepsibling, Philip Hinde. The impact of the death of Richard, Anne, and Philip is discussed below and in the next chapter. See p. 2 of this thesis.

capacity to do'. His apparent disinclination to print was also based on what he described as the 'many divisions that are now among us and that every man broaches his own fancies'. Nehemiah surmised that these divisions in society caused the people of his time to have very 'little esteem' for what he referred to as 'Realities'. This opinion was possibly a way of commenting on the state of religion in 1653/54. After all, these were the post-civil war years. The victory of the Parliamentary forces and an atmosphere of religious toleration during this period had given rise to the open expression of different theological perspectives that concerned more traditional Puritans.² Nehemiah's decision to forgo publication, though, ultimately boiled down to insecurities about what he had actually written. He wrote that some of the things that he had written in his manuscripts were 'for my own comfort, (which) I gathered out of other books and some I did study out, which is better in other books then I could frame it'. Other material, he confessed, was simply 'written by my own Experience'. His reason for not publishing, then, and for reading over all of his manuscripts in 1653/54, seemed to be based on the idea that he did not know if his writings were any good - whether his manuscripts contained anything others might enjoy or find useful. It was only after he came to the end of his review, two hundred folios later, that Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that he had 'found many a precious Jewel in the dust and dunghill of my works'. This assessment of his writing appeared to be a combination of two verses from the Bible, Proverbs 20:15 and 1 Samuel 2:8, and was Nehemiah's way saying that he believed God had refined his poor and needy abilities, in intellect and eloquence, into a collection of precious

² David Como, 'Radical Puritanism, c. 1558 – 1660', in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 252. Later, in his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah commented on the divisions amongst even the godly writing 'that now of late when instead of godly conference to edify one another we have jars and janglings at one another, and instead of reading good books, time is spent in reading pamphlets and controversies which do little edify me'. See FS MS V.a.436, fol. 167. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 292.

jewels of wisdom that were as good as any provided by princes of divinity or other literary lights.⁴

The objective of this chapter is to examine what Nehemiah was trying to accomplish in writing his manuscripts, or ‘books’ as he called them, from 1619 to 1654. This will be done by exploring how Nehemiah described the transition from merely keeping a record of his daily sins out of what appeared to be an emotional response to tragedy in 1609 to the more formal approach that he deployed from his earliest writings in 1619 and 1620. The focus of this examination will be where Nehemiah recorded his description of that transition in his last extant manuscript. At one point, this manuscript actually appeared to be two manuscripts that Nehemiah combined in order to make a single ‘book’. Nehemiah hinted at this coupling of two manuscripts when he explained in his letter ‘To the Christian Reader’ at the front of the manuscript that he was ‘constrained to write what I have written before in another Book, which is an Extract of the Passages of My Life’. Perhaps this combination of two manuscripts is indicated by the full title of the extant piece, which is ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or The Book of All My Writing Books’. In the examination of what Nehemiah was trying to accomplish in writing his manuscripts or ‘books’, this chapter will pay particular attention to what seemed to be the first part of the manuscript, which fell under the second half of this title, ‘The Book of All My Writing Books’. This part contained his survey of the entire catalogue of his writings, began on fol. 1, and continued for two hundred folios. It is in the early folios of this section that Nehemiah described his transition from merely keeping a record of his

⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fols. viii – ix, 200. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 264, 297 – 298. Proverbs 20:15 reads in the Geneva Bible, ‘There is gold, and a multitude of precious stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel’. 1 Samuel 2:8 reads, ‘He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the seat of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and he hath set the world upon them’. On Nehemiah’s use of the Geneva Bible, see pp. 64 - 67 of this thesis.

daily sins to the expanded and calculated approach that he deployed in his first proper 'book'. In order to see, though, how this enlarged and more focused tactic that he adopted (in 1619) became the basis for all of his manuscripts, some consideration of passages from his other extant writings will also be examined. These additional manuscripts included in the examination are his earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of Gods Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance' and his fourth extant manuscript, 'The Growth of a Christian'. The question that guides the examination of this material is: If Nehemiah seemed to express uncertainty, at the end of his life, as to what his manuscripts contained, or whether they provided anything useful for anyone other than himself, what can be deduced about his purpose for writing them?

For some, rather than piety, Nehemiah's writing sprang from a 'compulsion', a mental and emotional reaction characterized by the 'urgency' to put knowledge and information down on paper.⁵ According to this theory, this 'compulsion' or 'urgency' is what led Nehemiah to produce some 20,000 folios of 'personal papers' that included 'memoirs, religious reflections, political reportage, letters, and a spiritual diary'. Such a massive literary production was an incredible feat, as one scholar surmises, 'even in that wordy generation' of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century. The acknowledgement of this accomplishment has even prompted one scholar to temper his statement regarding an unplanned or unfocused reaction as Nehemiah's motivation for writing: according to this scholar that 'the survival of such a quantity of private writings was not entirely accidental, for what we have today are not rough notes or miscellaneous bundles of family papers but rather words carefully copied in a schoolboy's italic, sometimes indexed, and explicitly intended for

⁵ See Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 11 – 12, and Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 9.

posterity'.⁶ Yet, despite this attempt to soften the argument, supporters of this theory have maintained that Nehemiah's manuscripts are the result of a psychological impulse rather than a conscious and intentional effort. Based primarily in psychology, this claim centers largely on speculation regarding Nehemiah's mental and emotional motivations for writing. For example, it suggests that Nehemiah felt compelled to write out of the complex relationship that he shared with his father. It also asserts that another contributing factor may have been a feeling of inadequacy: Nehemiah may have used writing to mask feelings of 'shame' due to his perception that he was not as 'articulate' and equally adept at navigating his role in society as well as his 'father and older brother'. In other words, according to this premise, Nehemiah wrote his manuscripts either out of a desire to imitate or please his paternal figure, or to express an otherwise repressed inner self that had no other means of free communication. Supporters of this theory have focused particularly on what they view as a difference in Nehemiah's pursuit of piety, which included writing, after his father's death in 1638. As one scholar puts it, before his father's death Nehemiah had 'confused his earthly father with his Heavenly Father'.⁷

In contrast to the above supposition, this chapter will demonstrate that while Nehemiah may have started to write out of an emotional response or sense of 'urgency' early in his life, those manuscripts he considered his 'books' - those fifty manuscripts that he catalogued and surveyed in his last extant manuscript in 1653/54 – were composed out of an intentional strategy that he clearly presented and explained. A seemingly uncontrollable desire within Nehemiah to write was certainly

⁶ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 2 – 3.

⁷ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 2 – 12, 74 – 75. Booy seems to follow Seaver in referring the death of his father as a significant event in Nehemiah's 'spiritual progress': *Notebooks... of Wallington*, p. 25. The interpretation of Nehemiah's religious and pietistic struggles as related to his relationship with his father (an 'Oedipus Complex') has obvious roots in the psychoanalytic theories found in Freud's essay 'The Return of Totemism in Childhood', in *Totem and Taboo*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1950).

undeniable. In his last extant manuscript, he admitted that reading and writing had caused him to neglect his work, his family, and spend the little money he had on composition books.⁸ Yet, despite this admission, Nehemiah gave no indication that his desire to write was related to a need to mimic his father, or to express any repressed feelings of inadequacy compared to his father's and brother's more artful ability to articulate themselves. Private texts that reflect a 'spontaneous' or 'candid' urge to put thoughts and feelings down on paper are often categorized as diaries. Nehemiah's manuscripts, however, demonstrate something more than a diary.

More than an impulse to create a record of his personal thoughts and experiences, Nehemiah's manuscripts reflect what one scholar has argued characterized early modern autobiography, an interest in writing itself.⁹ This is not to say that Nehemiah was uninterested in writing down his experiences, nor expressing his own point of view. What it does mean, though, is that a larger intention appears to have been behind Nehemiah's purpose in composing his manuscripts. In other words, the feigning of his 'capacity' to write as well as those published writers whom he described in 1653/54 as 'so excellent', was only a thin disguise of his personal ambition. This claim is based upon evidence that Nehemiah supplied in his last extant manuscript that suggests he began to assert himself among those published writers in the seventeenth century; an ambition that was a major part of his reasons to write from the very beginning. In describing his decision to start what he considered his first, proper 'book' in 1619/20, Nehemiah wrote that he chose the title 'The Widow's Mite' because of 'that little ability which I had cast in the great treasury of other's good works'. The title 'The Widow's Mite' was a reference to Jesus' comments on

⁸ FS MS V.a.436, x-xi. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 264 – 265.

⁹ Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 3. This stands in contrast to the opinion of Seaver, who writes in *Wallington's World* that 'Whatever the compulsions that drove Wallington to write so much, he has left us nothing like a genuine autobiography': *Wallington's World*, p. 12.

the poor widow who donated two small coins to the temple treasury. According to the story told in the gospels of Mark 12:42 – 44 and Luke 21:2 – 4, what the woman gave in comparison to several rich people was very small. Jesus, though, told his disciples that the widow had given more than any of the rich people because she gave out of her poverty while the rich gave out their wealth.¹⁰ As evidenced by the following examples, this was a common way to express the ambition to present one's ideas in writing with humility in the early seventeenth century. In his letter 'To the Christian Reader' at the front of *A golden chain: or The description of theology containing the order of the causes of salvation and damnation* (1600), William Perkins wrote, 'here I make bold to offer to thy godly consideration: in reading whereof, regard not so much the thing itself, penned very slenderly, as mine intent and affection: who desire among the rest, to cast my mite into the treasury of the Church of England, and for want of gold, pearl, and precious stone, to bring a rams skin or twain, and a little Goats hair, to the building of the Lord's tabernacle (Exod. 35:23)'.¹¹ The same sentiment is expressed in another example found in a letter that Thomas Adams addressed to one of his patrons, Lady Jane Gostwicke. In preface to the second of four of his sermons printed under the title *The Devil's Banquet* (1614), Adams wrote to Lady Gostwicke, 'Madame: I am bold to add one Book more to your Library, though it be but as a Mite into your Treasury. I that have found you so ever favorable to any work of mine, cannot but confidently hope your acceptance of this. Not for the worth of it, but because it bears your name (and my duty) in the forehead, and offers itself to the world, through your patronage'.¹² And, finally, in his letter 'To the Christian Reader' in *The perpetuity of a regenerate man's estate* (1626), which sounded very much like

¹⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 9. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

¹¹ William Perkins, *A golden chain: or The description of theology containing the order of the causes of salvation and damnation*, (London, 1600), 'To the Christian Reader'.

¹² Thomas Adams, *The Devil's Banquet*, (London, 1614), p. 36.

Wallington's own apology for not printing his manuscripts because of his belief that 'many divisions' and personal 'fancies' existed among the readers of his day, William Prynne wrote,

Christian Reader, when as I had well considered with my self the great danger and combustion that was likely to befall our Church and State, by reason of some dangerous points of Pelagianism, Popery, and Arminianism, which some factious and novelizing spirits, have lately broached and set foot among us, as the received positive and resolved doctrines, not only of the Scriptures, Fathers, and Protestant Churches in foreign parts, but likewise of the Church of England; I supposed, that I could not perform a better piece of service to God, or to our Church and State, then to cast my Mite among the rest, and to endeavor according to my poor ability, to stop the stream and current of these late revived and new minted Errors; which by reason of the learning, fame and greatness of their Patrons, and the depravation of man's nature (which is always more propense and prone to Error, then to truth and holiness) are like to threaten a general and universal deluge to our Church and State, if authority prevent them not in time...¹³

A sense of 'urgency' or 'compulsion' may have characterized Nehemiah's first attempts to write in response to the death of his stepsiblings, in 1609, which involved keeping a record of his daily sins. As Nehemiah recalled in his last extant manuscript, he was eleven-years-old when a terrible 'sickness' struck his father's house and took the life of his childhood friend and stepbrother, Philip Hinde, along with two other stepsiblings. At the time of the sickness, Nehemiah remembered being sent to stay with his grandmother, which was probably done in an effort to

¹³ William Prynne, *The perpetuity of a regenerate man's estate*, (London, 1626), p. 5.

shield him from contracting the deadly contagion.¹⁴ While at his grandmother's, Nehemiah described how he poured out his heart to God, and pleaded with the Lord to allow him to return to his childhood home. As part of his request, Nehemiah promised 'the Lord that if he send me to my Father's house again, O then I would have a care over my ways and do better then I had done'.¹⁵ It was when 'the Lord did give (Nehemiah) his desire', and returned him to his 'Father's house in safety', that he made his first attempts to write. After returning to his father's house, Nehemiah quickly failed to keep his promise. Instead of reforming his ways, he confessed in his last extant manuscript that, 'O then how many ways did I then offend my God in breaking my promises in disobedience to my parents and quarreling and other sin which my little conscience did chide me for'. In the midst of this failure, and as a way

¹⁴ This was referred to as 'shutting in'. Nehemiah was removed from his father's home where the sickness was believed to have taken hold, while the others were 'shut in' to contain the spread of the contagion. It is interesting to note, however, that Nehemiah was removed from his parent's house and the others were allowed to stay. If he had had contact with those who were ill, it was customary that he too would have been shut in along with the rest of his family. Shutting in was a practice that dated back to the Middle Ages, when, during outbreaks of the plague, certain areas or places in the city were designated as 'shut ins'. In his diary, Pepys noted how a Dr. Burnet was praised for shutting in he and his servant when he discovered that his servant had contracted the plague. During the outbreak of plague in 1665, the entire village of Eyam, in Derbyshire, was shut in. During the Middle Ages and even into sixteenth century England, shutting in could be a traumatic and difficult experience, as it was often forced upon the sick and even those in a community who were not sick by governing officials. Frequently, as demonstrated in the case of Nehemiah, shutting in could also separate loved ones from one another. Because of the complications and difficulties that surrounded shutting in, the practice became hotly contested. See Joseph Patrick Byrne, *Daily Life During the Black Death*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), pp. 131 – 136.

¹⁵ For some Puritans, making promises to God could pertain to the language of conversion, specifically the spiritual movement from relating to God through the Covenant of Works to the Covenant of Grace. However, this was not always the case. An individual could also make promises 'to God to undertake a particular duty or refrain from a specific sin'. See Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 48 – 49. More will be said about the way Nehemiah understood the death of his stepsiblings' and his response with piety in chapter three of this thesis. The minister at Saint James Clerkenwell in Middlesex, John Andrews, associated making promises to God with greater pietistic devotion after repentance: 'Wherefore to conclude, I beseech thee gentle Reader, in the Name of Jesus, and for Christ his sake, to beware that thou defer not thy repentance, lest thou find thy heart deeply wounded, when thou shalt find many sins committed and not repented, and many of thy promises made to God, but in little or no measure performed. See John Andrewes, *Andrewes resolution to return to God by repentance. Directed unto all the elect children of God, which truly repent, perfectly guiding them in the right way therein*, (London, 1621), pp. 45 – 46. See also, John Andrewes on promises in *The brazen serpent*, (London, 1621), pp. 13 – 14; Lewis Bayly, *The practice of piety directing a Christian how to walk that he may please God*, (London, 1613), p. 852; and, John Brinsley, *The fourth part of the true watch containing prayers and tears for the churches*, (London, 1624), p. 21.

to aid his efforts ‘to reform and be better’ he testified that he ‘did begin to write down my sins’. He eventually ‘lost’ this first book, and stated that he ‘gave it over for that time’. But, this first attempt to write, by keeping a daybook of his sins, was possibly based in an instinctual reaction to avoid another occasion where the Lord might send him away from his father’s house or cause affliction and even death to those whom he loved.¹⁶

Nehemiah never acknowledged that he picked up the pen and recorded the results of his daily self-examination in order to follow the advice of a clergyman or book that he might have read, but self-examination and writing down one’s sins was indeed a practice frequently employed and encouraged by many Puritan writers in late sixteenth and seventeenth century England. One of the more celebrated of these publications was Richard Rogers’ *Seven Treatises* (1618). Rogers not only practiced and advised his readers to examine themselves daily and provide themselves with a daily ‘direction’ from that process, he also kept a diary.¹⁷ Richard’s nephew, John Rogers, a minister in Essex and longtime lecturer in Dedham, followed his uncle’s footsteps. In a fragment that he wrote entitled ‘Sixty memorials for a godly life’, he too encouraged his reader to examine his or her self, daily. (The popularity of the subject of daily, self-examination among Puritans was demonstrated by fact that John Rogers’ fragment was published in 1704, eighty years after his death, in 1636.) According to John Rogers in this fragment (in words that by the end of the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis will sound oddly similar to Wallington’s own manuscripts), ‘He that makes Conscience of his Ways, and to please God his only Way, is to take him to a Daily Direction, and some set rules, thereby looking

¹⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 3 – 4. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 266 – 267.

¹⁷ Cotton Mather, ‘Sixty memorials for a godly life’, in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, (1704), III. 109 - 113. Quoted in Tom Webster, ‘Writing to Redundanc: approaches to spiritual journals and early modern spirituality’, *The Historical Journal*, 39:1, (1996), p. 37, nn. 19 – 21.

constantly to his heart all the Day... if a man tie not himself thus to Rules, his heart will break from him, and be disguised one way or another'.¹⁸ John Rogers also recommended that the pious individual should 'begin the day with meditation, thanksgiving, confession, and prayer', and pay constant attention to their conduct in social engagements with others throughout the day. According to John Rogers, the individual should then commence with 'shutting up the Day in Examination, and viewing it over'.¹⁹ In addition to the two Rogers', there was also the example and recommendations found in the life and works of Thomas Shepard.²⁰ Shepard not only kept a diary or journal of his life and spiritual experiences, but also preached in a series of sermons from 1636 and 1640 in New England that the 'secret defilement' of the church is caused by a lack of self-examination (among other things):

Here is stronger Temptation to neglect private Prayer and Meditation, partly by want of room, partly by multitudes of businesses, and work and cares hereabout, that being weary in the day, sleepy at night, busy in the morning, Prayer, Meditation, daily examination are sent away as Paul from Felix....²¹

For Shepard, in other words, not only was the spiritual health of an individual dependent upon daily self-examination, so too was the health of an entire congregation. Still, the prevalence of this exhortation to daily self-examination in Puritan culture, and even the possibility that Nehemiah connected such examinations with writing from his reading or hearing the recommendation to do so from in books and sermons, is not clearly evident in his manuscripts.

When Nehemiah wrote, in a later extant manuscript, that on 11 May 1643 he

¹⁸ On the similarities of these words to statements and expressions made by Nehemiah, see chapters 4, 5 and particularly pp. 182 – 184 of this thesis.

¹⁹ Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, III, 109 - 113. Quoted in Tom Webster, 'Writing to Redundancy', p. 37 n. 19 – 21.

²⁰ Shepard's lifespan was almost exactly the same as Nehemiah's. Nehemiah was born in 1598, Shepard in 1605. Nehemiah died in 1658, Shepard in 1649. On Shepard's life, see Michael Jenkins, 'Shepard, Thomas (1605–1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²¹ These sermons were posthumously published in Thomas Shepard, *The parable of the ten virgins*, (1660); this quotation is taken from p. 38.

heard Hugh Peter say in a sermon to ‘keep your daybook; write down your sins on one side, and on the other side God’s little mercies’, he expressed a sense of surprise, as if this was something that no one else practised. He wrote that Peter’s recommendation to include writing in self-examination ‘did like me well because by God’s mercy I practice it already’. Peter’s advice only spurred Nehemiah on to do more precisely what he had been doing for many years. He wrote, ‘I do intend to begin to do it in a more exact manner the next day, being my birthday’.²² Nehemiah’s occasional use of his manuscripts as daybooks to record his sins, therefore, does not seem to have been the result of his attempts to copy a pattern recommended by others. Based on the evidence in his manuscript, the tendency to record his sins in a manuscript simply represented his use of a common pietistic practice and authorial pattern that he happened to employ out of a natural urge or instinct.

The practice of writing down his daily sins would continue for the rest of Nehemiah’s life, and is evident in at least three of his seven extant manuscripts. He would often devote entire manuscripts to this endeavor, but it was also a practice that appeared in the style of a diary or journal within manuscripts devoted to themes more broad.²³ For example, in one section of his earliest extant manuscript, Nehemiah made three entries (dated from 21 June to 25 June) wherein he discussed the ‘mercy of God’ perceived by him in events that transpired throughout a given day.²⁴ This pattern was repeated toward the end of his last extant manuscript, for example, when he recorded

²² BL MS 40883, fol. 98r.

²³ Nehemiah testified to keeping a record of his daily sins in two manuscripts in 1652 and 53 that he titled ‘A Day Book of my Sins, or Of Experienced Mercies’ and ‘Experienced Mercies: Experienced Mercies of Faith’. These manuscripts are not extant. See V.a.436, fol. 194. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 296.

²⁴ GL MS 204, fols. 437 – 439. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 71 – 73.

entries dated from 10 August to 25 August 1654.²⁵ The diary-style was apparently very appealing to Nehemiah. More than simply adopting that style in spurts, he also wrote on an unpaginated sheet of paper (now found inserted between two pages in his earliest extant manuscript) that at one point he intentionally tried to keep a ‘Diary of my life, the comings and goings of the spirit’.²⁶ The title of this diary was ‘The Growth of a Christian’, and is now part of the extant catalogue of Nehemiah’s writings. ‘The Growth of a Christian’ contains passages that date from January 1641 to December 1643. Nehemiah never claimed to have written this manuscript out of the advice given to him by his father, a friend, or from hearing sermons or reading something in a book. Such advice, though, was being given in sermons preached in England in the years before he wrote ‘The Growth of a Christian’. During the 1630s, for example, John Beadle delivered lectures on diary writing that would eventually be printed under the title, *The Diary or Journal of a Thankful Christian* (1656). Based on Numbers 33:3, Beadle encouraged the hearers of his sermons and the readers of his book to keep a diary because it helped one live in a Christian manner and value their contribution to society, while also keeping an eye on their personal failings with sin.²⁷ Perhaps Nehemiah’s own style of diary writing had grown out his practice of self-examination. For example, the Scottish minister, Robert Blair, started his diary ‘having heard of the practice of some diligent Christians, who daily took brief notes of the condition of their souls’.²⁸

²⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 339 – 348. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 320 – 322.

²⁶ This insert is found in GL MS 204, between folios 44 and 45. It was obviously inserted after Nehemiah had at least started writing BL MS 40883, ‘The Growth of a Christian’. See also Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, p. 49.

²⁷ Just as in the case of Thomas Shepard, Beadle’s lifespan also matched Nehemiah’s. Nehemiah was born in 1598, Beadle, three years earlier, in 1595. Nehemiah died in 1658, Beadle in 1667. On Beadle, see Tom Webster, ‘Beadle, John (1595–1667)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004. See also John Beadle, *The Diary or Journal of a Thankful Christian*, (London, 1656).

²⁸ *The life of Mr. Robert Blair, minister of St. Andrews...*, Thomas M’Crie, ed., (Edinburgh, 1848), p. 31. See also Webster, ‘Writing to Redundancy’, p. 37.

Nehemiah, though, quickly started to do more than keep a daily record of his sins in the years that followed his stepsiblings' death, because (in his opinion) it was a practice that had not helped him conform his life to a godly pattern. After his prayer had been answered and God returned him to his father's house in 1609, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript, 'O then how many ways did I then offend my God in breaking my promises in disobedience to my parents and quarreling and others sins'. He would try and renew the promise he made with God, but 'again and again' he failed to produce the change he expected. His failure to achieve this change was not due to a lack of effort. In addition to writing down his daily sins, Nehemiah was quite clear that he had at least tried to perform all the necessary pietistic obligations that he believed were necessary to exact the change he desired. It was, in fact, an approach to such change that would go on for some time. He wrote in remembrance of this period (in his last extant manuscript) that for 'Seven years more I spent in a civil life being somewhat conformable unto holy duties'. What this meant was that for those seven years after his stepsiblings' death Nehemiah performed those pietistic exercises (both in community with others and on his own) that he believed were proper and appropriate for someone in pursuit of a godly lifestyle or disposition. These exercises included family Bible study, prayer, and going to church, his practice of which was evident in the following confession. Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that he performed these 'holy duties' 'both public and private in the family with my Father and often in private prayer by myself, with often going to church on the weekdays'.²⁹

The failure to conform his life to a pattern of godliness was not due to a lack of family support. Nehemiah wrote that during his pursuit of piety in those first seven years after his stepsiblings' death that he 'had many good Books given to me by my

²⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 4-5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

Father and my Brother, John'. He noted, in particular, that in 1615 his 'loving father did give me a Bible and my Brother John did give me Master Brinsley's Book called the True Watch and Rule of Life'.³⁰ The support of his father and brother through gifts of devotional literature was not just relegated to this period either; many of the two hundred books that Nehemiah confessed to reading in his lifetime were probably given to him by his father and brother. After noting the gift of the Bible and Brinsley's *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615), he wrote that his father and brother had given him 'many other good books... before and since'. The support and encouragement offered by his father and brother, however, extended well beyond books. When Nehemiah wrote this, forty-five years later, he recorded that he 'did see the great love and mercy of God to me a vile sinner in giving to me a loving and tender Father and a loving and tender Brother, not only over my body, but also over my soul'. His recollection of the gifts, in other words, seemed only to remind him of the 'many loving Admonitions, instructions, (and) counsels' that he had received from his 'tender Father'. He recalled how his tender father had done all this along with 'many prayers and tears put up unto God for me'. His description of the relationship he shared with his brother was similar. He described that relationship as full of 'tender love and care', and testified that his brother, John, had provided him with that affectionate support 'ever since I can remember'. He summarized his recollection of this attention offered by his father and brother with the hindsight of forty-five years

³⁰ As David Booy has noted, a new edition of Brinsley's *True watch and rule of life* was published in 1615. Perhaps the copy given to Nehemiah by his brother was a copy of this new edition. The name 'John Wallington' is written on the title page of a copy of *The third part of the true watch*, (London, 1622), which is held at Cambridge University Library (Syn.7.62.133). See Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267 n. 21. More is said about Nehemiah's reading of Brinsley on pp. 126 – 139 of this thesis.

by writing that it proceeded ‘from the tender loving God which is the great Fountain of all love and Mercies from whence these springs of mercy do come’.³¹

Nehemiah attributed his failure to conform his life to a godly pattern, despite his best efforts at piety and the help offered by his family, to an inherited ‘condition’ that he hinted at in inferences and direct references to Scripture. This was done in a dizzying, but quite masterful fashion in a passage just before the record of his stepsiblings’ death. Over the course of just three sentences in that passage, Nehemiah blended his own biographical history with phrases and parts from at least six passages from the Bible. Much of this was done on the basis of Psalm 51:5, Romans 5, and Ezekiel 16:3, the latter of which he referenced directly. This passage reads in his manuscript,

I, Nehemiah Wallington, had Christian parents, A holy Father and a gracious Mother, yet they could not derive grace in my soul; for May the 12 1598 at five o’ clock in the morning was I born in sin and came forth polluted into the wicked world. And in regard of my miserable condition as I did come out of Old Adam the poison of my Nature is the same that is in the wickedest wretch in the world. And by nature I am prone to all manner of sin yet by the great mercy of God I have escaped many horrible and grievous sins, which diverse others fall into. And for confirmation of this what a sinful stock I come off and what a miserable condition I was in you may see in Ezekiel 16:3.³²

In addition to his own reading of the Bible, Nehemiah certainly could have acquired his knowledge of these verses from his study of books and other various printed sources in 1654. One broadside, in particular, the anonymously written *The invincible weapon, or truths triumph over errors* (1648), had been printed only six years prior, and was sold close to Wallington’s home at ‘the west of Paul’s’. The purpose of this broadside was to provide a quick list of Scripture references in order to refute twenty-nine false beliefs or errors that challenged basic Christian doctrine. In ‘Error XXVIII.

³¹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

³² FS MS V. a.436, fol. 1. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 266.

That children have no original sin', the author of this broadside referred the reader to Psalm 51:5: 'Behold I was born in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me'. To this verse, the author of the broadside then added Ezekiel 16:3-6, 'As for thy nativity in the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water, And no eye pitied thee, and when I passed by I saw thee polluted in thine own blood, and said unto thee, live'.³³ While Nehemiah could have read and been influenced by this broadside, he gave no indication that his knowledge of these passages came from anything other than his own reading of the Bible.

The skill by which Nehemiah applied the teachings of Scripture to his failure to conform his life to a godly pattern displayed the seasoned abilities of a person well versed in the Bible, which, in truth, was a skill that he had only just begun to acquire in the years that immediately followed his stepsiblings' death. After nine years of trying to conform his life to a godly pattern, Nehemiah reported that in the year 1618 he added to his collection of books and pietistic resources 'a great Bible with the notes'. This was the massive Geneva Bible with its commentary on Scripture provided in the margins. Nehemiah testified that his use of this Bible was primarily in private, writing in his manuscript that he read 'a chapter every night after my Father and all the family was gone to bed asleep'. He also testified that little did he

³³ Anon., *The invincible weapon or truths triumph over errors, by which all the true bred sons of the Church, may obtain strength to withstand the desperate tenets that have been broached, whereby the godly of our times may be fore-warned and fore-armed against their soul enemies*, (London, 1648), quotations from the single page of this broadside.

understand from this reading of the Bible and ‘less did I practice’.³⁴

The skill to apply the Bible to his struggle to conform his life to a godly pattern would eventually come for Nehemiah, but from a method that he employed in 1619/20 to write his earliest manuscript, ‘The Widow’s Mite’, which he described as the gathering of ‘places of holy scripture’. In the survey of all his manuscripts in his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah wrote that in 1620, in his efforts ‘to live in a most holy and strict life’ he gathered ‘places of holy scripture, which were commands of God’.³⁵ The gathering of ‘places’ was a practice that Nehemiah devoted himself to in many of his manuscripts. Two years after writing ‘The Widow’s Mite’, he wrote ‘another book with places of holy Scripture’, which he admitted to gathering in order to fight ‘against all manner of sins’. He wrote another manuscript in 1637, entitled ‘A book of places of Scripture which I gathered out to show the woeful estate of the wicked and the happy estate of the godly’.³⁶ In 1645, he composed a ‘book’ that he described by stating on ‘one end I have written places of Scripture, how the Lord hath heard and helped his children in war, and at the other end are places of Scripture of a right Fast, and how such a Fast and prayer prevailed with God’.³⁷

The notion of gathering ‘places’ (information or ideas) from speeches or books was possibly an indication that Nehemiah was using the popular educational method

³⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 6. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267. Andrew Cambers has recently referred to Nehemiah’s study as a negative space based on an incident that he recorded in his manuscript, ‘The Growth of a Christian’. In this passage, Nehemiah wrote that he dreamed of opening “his study door for to go to pray, there was a thing like a man dressed in black ready to destroy me”. The context of the story, however, and Nehemiah’s interpretation of the purpose of the ‘man in black’ seems to have had little to do with the study itself. In context, the ‘man in black’ was a symbol of judgment regarding what Nehemiah feared was an improper or unethical business transaction that had recently occurred. Elsewhere, in an earlier extant manuscript, Nehemiah recorded a story of a man that ‘went all in black’ through the streets of London preaching woe and judgment. See BL MS 40883, fols. 8 – 9v, and BL MS 1457, fol. 1. See also, Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 74. The points Cambers makes based on the Wallington texts raise some questions. Nevertheless, his analysis of reading in different contexts is valuable. See pp. 100 – 112 of this thesis.

³⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11; Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

³⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fols. iii - vi and 61. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 282 – 283.

³⁷ FS MS V.a.436, fols. iii – vi.

of writing in late medieval and early modern society known as commonplacing.³⁸ Commonplacing was believed to have originated with Aristotle and Cicero, and revitalized during the classical revival during the Renaissance, and entered into English culture through a variety of sources, including Erasmus' *De Copia* (1528).³⁹ The formative ideas upon which commonplace method originated could be located in Aristotle's discussion of the use of topics in reasoning and educating one's self on a given subject for oratory in *On Rhetoric*. In this discussion, Aristotle advised that one should be aware of commonly held wisdom or propositions. Knowledge of generally accepted propositions on a certain topic, in Aristotle's opinion, not only prepared the speaker for argument and enabled him to better persuade an audience of his particular slant, but also indicated a certain level of credibility.⁴⁰ Following Aristotle, the idea of collecting 'places' of knowledge for wisdom and ethical performance was developed by Cicero, and carried forward by the Roman philosopher of rhetoric, Quintilian. Differing from Aristotle and Cicero, according to Quintilian it was not enough to simply record places of wisdom or knowledge and retain it in personal notebooks. For Quintilian, the individual was to train the memory, 'to learn by heart' those places or excerpts of knowledge, and, in doing so, be able to quote naturally the expressions and vocabulary of learned men as well as mimic their style. It was not until the early modern era that Quintilian's call for absorption and individual expression came into full bloom.⁴¹ By then, it had developed into a clearer method of reading and

³⁸ Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 1 – 13. Some would disagree that Nehemiah was using a commonplace method in the composition of his manuscripts. This opinion perhaps reflects an incorrect or at least outdated view of commonplacing as a 'passive' activity. See Seaver, *Wallington's World*, p. 6.

³⁹ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, pp. 2 – 5, 51 – 82; Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, p. 125. See also Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order*, chapter 3, and Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions*, (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 41 and 277-280.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, George A. Kennedy, trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Book I, ii – iv. Book II, xii.

⁴¹ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, pp. 10-11.

processing knowledge. Borrowing from another classical source, the writers of commonplace books in the later medieval period and early modern period would turn to the writings of Seneca, who described the practice of commonplace writing in the following way:

We should imitate bees and we should keep in separate compartments whatever we have collected from our diverse reading, for things conserved separately keep better. Then, diligently applying all the resources of our native talent, we should mingle all the various nectars we have tasted, and turn them into a single sweet substance, in such a way that, even if it is apparent where it originated, it appears quite different from what it was in its original state.⁴²

Nehemiah's practice of identifying certain 'places' of Scripture was not only carried out by copying verses from the Bible into his manuscripts, but also by expressing himself through the words of Scripture. Examples of this practice have already been indicated in the introduction to this chapter, and in the discussion above about Nehemiah's interpretation of that inherited condition that kept him from conforming his life to a godly pattern. As evidenced by these examples, Nehemiah did not always reference the passage he was quoting from, nor did he make the reader aware that he was expressing himself through the words of a Biblical author. Another example of this method of writing is found in his earliest extant manuscript in a passage that follows Nehemiah's report of a terrible fire that broke out on London Bridge in February 1633. After giving a list of those people whose houses were burned, he then attempted to discern for him and his reader 'what the good Lord our God teach(es) us so that we may not be vain beholders or hearers of this wonderful and fearful, yet just work of the Lord'. His purpose was to interpret the incident in a way 'that we may all make such use of this and all others his judgments and mercies as requireth in his word we should do, and as others of his children have done'. The

⁴² Seneca, *Letters*, 83.4, 4. Quoted in Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, p. 12.

goal, he surmised in this exercise, was ‘that we may not be so unwise as those that came to our Saviour Christ, and told him of the Galileans, that we should suppose that those that had their house and goods burnt upon the bridge were greater sinners than all the rest of the City of London because they suffered such things’. This was an interpretation and application of Luke 13:1-5 to the event, which Nehemiah partially quoted, writing ‘we shall hear that answer that he made to them I tell you nay, but except yee repent, yee shall all likewise perish’.⁴⁴

Others have shown that gathering and recording places into a personal notebook was not an unusual or unique practice, but was a style and method of writing deployed by many writers in the seventeenth century that reflected a certain way of interpreting and characterizing one’s experiences through a typological reading of the Bible. Typology was a practice whereby an individual read the Bible in order to find particular ‘types’ or patterns in the lives and history of Biblical characters, and events that were believed to be recapitulated in the contemporary lives of the elect. Several early modern autobiographers used typology to express and communicate their experiences to readers. For example, John Bunyan equated some of his experiences with spiritual temptation to the experiences of Biblical characters like Cain, Judas, and Peter. Similarly, Lucy Hutchinson interpreted her husband’s retirement, in her memoir, ‘as the preparation of Moses in the wilderness with his father in law, where it is thought he wrote the books of Genesis, and some believe that of Job’.⁴⁵

It is significant to note that Nehemiah searched for ‘places’ of knowledge in the Bible, and also measured his progress in godliness by listening and copying sermons into his manuscripts. This chapter has already evidenced that, in his efforts to conform

⁴⁴ GL MS 204, fol. 482. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 91 – 92.

⁴⁵ On typology and the recapitulation of experience in early modern autobiographical writing, see Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern*, pp. 143 – 149. Quote from Hutchinson and Bunyan are taken from Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, p. 145.

his life to a godly pattern after his stepsiblings' death in 1609, Nehemiah spent seven years 'in a civil life, being somewhat conformable unto holy duties'. He confessed that part of this effort to perform 'holy duties' involved 'often going to church on the week days'.⁴⁶ Church attendance and listening to sermons was an important activity that he would continue throughout his life. Sometime after 1629, Nehemiah even wrote in his earliest extant manuscript that he 'heard nineteen sermons in one week'.⁴⁷ This seeming obsession with listening to sermons was evident right up through the later years of his life. In his last extant manuscript, in a passage that he recorded in April 1654, just four years before his death, Nehemiah wrote how, for his morning 'exercise', he traveled to the parish of St. Andrew Hubbard, where his father once lived for 'eight years and never heard one sermon'. Nehemiah confessed that he had now attended, in that same parish, many sermons 'in a week'. He took great comfort in the thought that out of God's 'great mercy and free love' he had been provided with the opportunity to hear 'such abundance and variety of (God's) word which he hath denied to my forefathers'. He rejoiced at that fact that he had 'heard near unto thirty sermons in one month at that very church (besides other places) which my Father could not hear one sermon in eight years'.⁴⁸ From these many occasions, Nehemiah sometimes copied into his manuscripts the notes he took while listening to sermons.⁴⁹ Over his lifetime he dedicated entire manuscripts to sermon notes, many of which he gave to his wife, probably because she could not attend as many sermons as he did - someone had to stay home and take care of the children and the rest of the household while Nehemiah was away listening to preachers. In 1636, he filled an entire 'book with a black cover' with 'many precious sermons', which he gave to his

⁴⁶ GL MS 204, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

⁴⁷ GL MS 204, fols. 48 – 49. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 51.

⁴⁸ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 202 – 203. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 298 – 299.

⁴⁹ For an example, see BL MS 40883, fol. 33. This sermon is discussed on pp. 122 – 124 of this thesis.

wife. In 1646, he confessed to keeping in ‘two paper books’ of notes from sermons given by his own minister, Henry Roborough, and ‘some of them of Mr. Gifens, some of the Mr. Barker, and some of strangers, and some by my cousin, Church’. In 1647, he testified to ‘another book, which I did begin to write sermons in, I did give to my wife’.⁵¹

In addition to the Bible and sermons, Nehemiah searched for ‘places’ in books to help him in his pursuit of godliness. Similar to the purpose and methodology of typology, which involved looking and identifying with particular characters in the Bible, Nehemiah also interpreted his life through contemporary personages found in his reading of books like Nicholas Bacon’s *The relation of the fearful estate of Francis Spira* (1638) and *The historie of the damnable life, and deserved death of doctor John Faustus* (1608). Francis Spira was a cautionary tale popular among Protestants in the early modern world that portrayed the perils of spiritual temptation. Spira, a lawyer and well-educated Italian citizen, had converted to Lutheranism, but then succumbed to pressure from the Catholic authorities to renounce his Protestant beliefs. After relinquishing his Lutheran convictions, he then began to doubt his salvation and suffer from despair and demonic temptation. Spira’s friends believed that he suffered from melancholy, but Spira (deploying his own use of typology) compared his struggle to the biblical characters of Cain or Judas. According to Bacon’s account, Spira testified that he had ‘no faith, no trust, no hope; I am a Reprobate like Cain, or Judas, who casting away all hope of mercy, fell into despair; and my friends do me great wrong, that they suffer me not to go to the place of unbelievers as I justly deserve’. Spira was ultimately assaulted by suicidal thoughts,

⁵¹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 153. For Nehemiah’s sermon-note manuscripts, see numbers 11, 31, and 34 in his own catalogue of writings FS MS V.a.436, fols. iii – vii. See also Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, pp. 199 – 202. Arnold Hunt has demonstrated that remembering and passing along what one heard at sermon-time was an especially important responsibility for husbands and heads of household. See Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 73 – 75.

but seems to have been unable to follow through with an act of self-murder. Because of this failure, Bacon noted how Spira interpreted his plight as worse than that of Cain or Judas from a reading of Revelation 9:6. According to Bacon's account, 'professing that his pangs were such, as that the damned wights in hell endure not the like misery; that his estate was worse, then that of Cain or Judas; and therefore he desired to die: yet behold (saith he) the Scriptures are accomplished in me; they shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them; and verily, he seemed exceedingly to fear, lest his life should be drawn out to a longer thread'.⁵²

In *The historie of the damnable life, and deserved death of doctor John Faustus* (1608), Nehemiah would have found a similar tale of spiritual striving as that recorded in *The relation of the fearful estate of Francis Spira* (1638). The story of Faustus concerned the story of a well-educated man that relinquished his faith in exchange for worldly comfort. After experiencing all the pleasures and esteem the devil could provide, Faustus then began to fear the loss of eternal salvation and the thought of spending eternity in hell. In his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah wrote that he went through a period where he carried around a copy of Bacon's Spira and Faustus in his pockets. From Spira, he admitted that he was particularly struck by a place in the story where 'Francis Spira saith, if I could conceive but the lest spark of hope of a better estate hereafter I would not refuse to endure the most heavy weight of the wrath of the great God; yea, for twenty thousand years so that I might at length attain to the end of that misery which I now know will be eternal'. Another place in Spira that he found significant was when 'Spira said (again) Take heed to yourselves. It is not light or easy matter to be a Christian; it is not baptism, or reading of the Scriptures, or boasting of faith in Christ that can prove one to be an absolute

⁵² Nicholas Bacon, *The relation of the fearful estate of Francis Spira*, pp. 41 – 43, 111. 'Wights' was a term used to refer to a type of sentient being'. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'wights', (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Christian. There must be a conformity in life; a Christian must be strong and unconquerable not carrying an obscure profession, but resolute expressing the image of Christ and holding out against all opposition to the last breath'.⁵³ From Faustus, Nehemiah noted how Faustus' spirit Mephostophiles told Faustus 'that if he were a man as Faustus was and adorned with the gifts of nature as he had, Even so long as breath of God were in him, he would humble himself unto his Majesty, endeavoring all he could to keep his commandments, praise and glorify him that I might continue in his favor. So were I sure to enjoy the eternal joy in his Kingdom of Heaven'.⁵⁴ It may have been easy for Nehemiah to see a reflection of his own life in the stories of Spira and Faustus. At the time that he testified to having read these tales, in 1634 and 1635, he had already passed through the most difficult spiritual struggle of his own life. It had only been eleven years since he made his last attempt (eleventh) at suicide from despair and demonic temptation. His remembrance of this time in his life was certainly evident in those particular 'places' he drew from these tales and recorded into his last extant manuscript from Spira and Faustus. Reflecting on the 'use' of both Spira and Faustus in his own life, Nehemiah wrote that 'The thoughts of these two sad spectacles caused me to praise God that I was yet upon the earth having time and means of grace and that Heaven Gates were not yet shut against me, for yet I had some hope and some glances of the eye of Faith towards my God, which others could not find any'. His reading of these books remind him how he had 'but the good spirit of God (by degrees) I had further comfort and strength, still admiring at God's free love, and praising God for time and heart and means of Grace which he had denied to many others'.⁵⁵

⁵³ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 45 – 46. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 275.

⁵⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 46. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 275.

⁵⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 47. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 275 – 276.

In looking for ‘places’ of Scripture and other books, it was possible that Nehemiah was utilizing a particular method of reading and writing that he picked up in school as a young boy. University students at Oxford and Cambridge used commonplace writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but commonplacing was also used in the education of grammar. Nehemiah could have learned to commonplace at school, along with memorizing his catechism. Before his stepbrother Philip’s death, in 1609, Nehemiah recalled walking to school with his favorite childhood friend, ‘pilfering and stealing’ along the way. Several educational texts prescribed commonplace writing as a tool for learning.⁵⁶ One such text, which was probably too late to have influenced Nehemiah, but nevertheless indicates how boys of Nehemiah’s ilk might learned to employ commonplace writing as a pietistic tool, was John Brinsley’s *Ludus literarius: or, The Grammar Schoole* (first published in 1612, but also published in an abbreviated format under the title, *A Consolation for our Grammar Schooles* in 1622). (This was the same John Brinsley who wrote *The true watch, and rule of life*, one of the books that Nehemiah’s brother gave him in the midst of his efforts ‘to reform and be better’ after his stepsiblings’ death.) The popularity of *Ludus literarius* in seventeenth century education is evident in its re-publications in 1622 and 1627. Brinsley also wrote a book on grammar entitled, *The posing of the parts, or, A most plain and easie way of examining the accidence and grammar by questions and answers arising directly out of the words of the rules whereby all scholars may attain most speedily to the perfect learning, full understanding, and right use thereof, for their happy proceeding in the Latine tongue : gathered purposely for the benefit of schools and for the use and delight of masters*

⁵⁶ Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, p. 125 n. 8. It was possible that Nehemiah also learned his catechism by using the commonplace method. Compare Nehemiah’s deployment of the phrase ‘pilfering and stealing’ with Ian Green’s discussion of the same phrase found in the writings of William Shakespeare in *The Christian’s ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c. 1530 – 1740*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 170.

and scholars (1614). *The posing of the parts* was republished at least eight times, with the last publication appearing in 1687. Brinsley had a keen interest in the art of commonplace writing perhaps due to his proficiency in Latin and classical literature, as well as his study and translation of Cicero.⁵⁷ He was also familiar with continental theories of education that were popular at the time, which were based in classical philosophy. He repeatedly recommended the work of Petrus Lagnerius in the *Ludus literarius* (1612), who composed a volume of extracts from Cicero in the commonplace style in the sixteenth century.⁵⁸ Most important, though, the *Ludus literarius* (1612) reflected the influence of Seneca and Quintilian by referring to the metaphorical imagery of flower gathering and the complete assimilation of knowledge by the student or compiler of quotations and excerpts. This is evident in the following passage from Brinsley:

This book I doe account of all other to bee the principal; the Latin of Tully being the purest and best, but the general applause of all the Learned: and because that book is a most pleasant posy, composed of all the sweet smelling flowers, picked of purpose out of all his works; that one book, together with the books which the children have or doe learn, shall also helpe to furnish them with some sentences, containing some of the choicest matter and words, belonging to all moral matters whatsoever; whether to understand, write, or speak thereof; that they shall bee able to go forward with much ease and delight.⁵⁹

While largely interested in grammar and retaining knowledge, Brinsley's theory also emphasized a Reformed Protestant ethic. Brinsley was strict in his admonition that teachers should model godly behaviour, and, in particular, the practice of daily Bible reading and catechizing.⁶⁰ For Brinsley, education and Christianity were intimately linked. Learning was a 'heavenly gift', and proper schooling should be made

⁵⁷ John Morgan, 'Brinsley, John (fl. 1581-1624),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁸ A Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, pp. 167-168. See also, Morgan, Brinsley, John (fl. 1581-1624),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁹ John Brinsley, *Ludus literarius: or, the Grammar Schoole*, (London, 1612), p. 153. Also quoted in Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, p. 169.

⁶⁰ John Brinsley, *A consolation for our Grammar Schooles*, (1622), p. 79

available to all young boys – both to the wealthy and meaner sort. As evident in the words of Brinsley’s own son, who would follow closely in the religious pattern set by his father, reading and learning were essential to salvation and obedience to the Word, which was Scripture. ‘How must we use that word?’ Brinsley asks ‘By reading, and hearing it read, and preached’. More importantly, however, ‘How must we read and hear it, that it may be effectual unto salvation?’ According to Brinsley, ‘We must read and hear it, with reverence, meekness, and Faith, desiring to learn, and purposing to obey.’⁶¹

Of course, Nehemiah could have learned the practice of looking and recording significant ‘places’ in a text by reading books. There is no direct evidence for this assertion in his manuscripts. However, in *The arte of prophesying* (1607), William Perkins advised preachers to keep a commonplace book in order to combat heretical or false beliefs. According to Perkins, ministers were to do this by looking for ‘places’ in Scripture and in the writings of Church Fathers. In studying these texts, Perkins encouraged the minister to search for ‘those things, which in studying thou meetest with, that are necessary and worthy to be observe’, and to put ‘those things’ ‘in thy tables or Common-place books, that thou mayest always have in a readiness both old and new’.⁶² Perkins’ advice on how to compose a commonplace book reflected the centuries of opinion that came before him, from Aristotle to Erasmus, which is reflected in his suggestions that the purpose of commonplacing was for the assimilation of knowledge. ‘All things, which thou readest’, wrote Perkins, ‘are not to

⁶¹ John Brinsley, *A breviat of saving knowledge, or, The principles of Christian religion methodically digested into short questions and answers purposely composed and published, for the use and benefit of such as have good desires but weake memories*, (1643), p. 14. Incidentally, the influence of Brinsley’s theories on the education of young Protestants could have also sparked Nehemiah’s frequent habit of attending church and taking notes on sermons. Brinsley recommended that schoolmasters take their pupils to hear sermons and to take notes on what they heard. On Nehemiah’s note taking at sermon time, see below in this chapter. See also Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 97, on Brinsley and taking children to hear sermons as part of primary school curricula.

⁶² William Perkins, *The arte of prophesying*, (London, 1607), p. 28.

be written in thy book, but those things that are worthy to be remembered, and are seldom met with – Neither must thou put the words of the Author in thy common places, but briefly note down the principal points of stories and of things, that thou mayest know from what author to fetch them, when thou shalt have use: and make a point in the author himself, that thou mayest know, that the thing is there handled, which thou wrotest in thy commonplace book'.⁶³ In addition to this emphasis on the practical use of knowledge, for Perkins, was the organization of information. For Perkins, the minister was to construct a commonplace book by dividing it into sections. These sections were then to be headed with important doctrines or theological issues. The commonplace book was also a work that Perkins felt would be ongoing and would never reach completion. According to Perkins, one's commonplace book should be a 'paper book', and carefully formatted, but one should also feel free to insert additional pages later. As evidenced earlier in this chapter, Nehemiah also inserted loose-leaf pages to his manuscripts.⁶⁴ Similarities between the use and method of commonplacing that Perkins described and Nehemiah's method of commonplace writing was also revealed in what both men referred to as 'branching'. In his recollection of his writing 'The Widow's Mite', not only did Nehemiah testify that he collected 'places' of Scripture but also that he wanted 'to know more about what the law of God was and to that end I did branch out every commandment, gathering places of holy scripture of the old and new Testament, the chapter and verse that speaks against all kind of sin and quote them in a book by themselves to be in a readiness that I may better know the will of God and so to lead my life thereafter'.⁶⁶

Whatever the influence for Nehemiah's approach to the study of the Bible by gathering specific 'places' might have been, the decision to employ that approach

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 28-30.

⁶⁴ For an example of this, see p. 56 of this thesis.

⁶⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 29. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 273.

seemed to be part of an intentional strategy that went well beyond the mere emotional reaction which had characterized his first attempts to write. His search for 'places' in a text to write down was only one part of a deliberate move that appeared to involve not only a concern for his own efforts at personal reform, but also how his writing might be read and received by others.

Nehemiah pointed to a larger intentional strategy that involved communicating to those who might read his manuscript when he described in his last extant manuscript the decision to buy a particular type of notebook and write in a specific style. In describing his decision to begin writing 'The Widow's Mite' in 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books', Nehemiah wrote how he discarded a 'paper book' that he started to write in 1618 and purchased a blank book the 'bigness of a quarto'. The term 'quarto' was a description of the paper size, a reference to the way in which one large sheet of paper was taken by the printer and folded four times to create four sheets or pages in a book. The size of a 'quarto' could range from 15 x 11 inches, also known as the 'imperial quarto', to 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, or the 'pot quarto'.⁶⁷ The difference in size in codex form was relative to the original size of the paper before folding. A loose sheet of paper or paper folded only once was referred to as a folio.⁶⁸ Nehemiah's second extant manuscript, 'A Memorial of God's Judgments', was an example of the folio style, as well as his third, fourth and sixth extant manuscripts 'A Bundle of God's Mercies', 'The Growth of a Christian', and 'Profitable and Comfortable Letters'. Wallington used the quarto size in his earliest extant manuscript, as well as 'A Record of Mercies continued or yet God is good to Israel' and his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of

⁶⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'quarto', (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'folio', (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

My Life' was approximately the size of an adult human hand. His calculated decision to use particular types of bound notebooks would seem to suggest that Wallington began his writing with a plan, and not merely out of an uncontrollable urge to write.⁶⁹ This concern for others was also indicated in the type of handwriting Nehemiah chose to use.⁷⁰ Nehemiah wrote in his last extant manuscript that he chose to write 'in Roman hand that others mite benefit by it as well as I...'⁷¹ The Roman hand was a reference to legibility, or the readable style of script. Shakespeare also made reference to this style of handwriting in the *Twelfth Night*: 'I think we doe know the sweet Roman hand'.⁷² Perhaps indicated by both passages from Nehemiah and Shakespeare the 'sweet Roman hand' was perceived as congenial and chosen out regard for others. Nehemiah's own version of the Roman hand could be described, based on the evidence from his extant manuscripts, as small (probably because he wanted to use as much space on a page as he could in order to avoid spending too much money on writing books), neat, and easy to read.⁷³

In addition to his choice of paper and style of handwriting, an indication that Nehemiah was trying to communicate particular points for his reader was also possibly indicated by his use of marginalia; more specifically, in his deployment of a symbol called the manicule.⁷⁴ The manicule was a small hand with the pointer finger extended deployed by printers, scribes and readers to point out particular passages in

⁶⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 9. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269. Wallington's reference to the type of paper he chose to use as an indication of intentionality and care with what he was undertaking in his manuscript writing was not unusual. See Mark Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, pp. 46 and 97.

⁷⁰ Mark Bland writes that good handwriting, in the early modern world, 'was an expression of good manners, reflecting a courtesy towards those who might have to read the advice, opinion, or ideas of another'. See Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, p. 93. See also in Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts*, p. 97: the neatness in penmanship that Nehemiah ascribes to his purpose suggests that his intentions in writing stretched beyond mere private use.

⁷¹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 9. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

⁷² *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'Roman', (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁷³ On Nehemiah's concern for spending too much money on notebooks, see FS MS V.a.436, fols. x-xi. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 264 – 265.

⁷⁴ William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), pp. 29-40.

a text. It was a symbol commonly found in many of the printed books and personal writings of individuals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many of the books Nehemiah could have read demonstrated the use of the manicule, as it was a form of marginalia recommended and utilized among Protestants in the early modern era for the purpose of pietistic study.⁷⁵ Some books even taught the pious reader how to use marginalia. An early example of such helps to reading by marking a text was found in Philip Melancthon's *Loci communes* (1521).⁷⁶ Another example was John Merbecke's 1585 edition of *Book of Notes and Common Places: with their Expositions... a work both profitable and also necessary, to those that desire the true understanding and meaning of holy Scripture*. There were also Edward Vaughn's *Ten introductions on how to read... the holy Bible* (1594), and George Webbe's devotional guide *How to carry ourselves in Sermon time* (1612). According to Webbe, the pious were to carry their own Bible when going to hear sermons and should 'mark the Text, observe the division; mark how every point is handled: quote the places of Scripture which he alledgeth for his Doctrine proof, fold down a leaf in your Bible from which the place is recited, that so at your leisure after your return from the Church, you may examine it'.⁷⁷ Perhaps, the most articulate and obvious work that directed the pious reader to mark a text was found in the writing of John Downname. Downname wrote in *A guide to godliness* (1622),

Read over the whole Scriptures seriously twice or thrice, and to observe as we go, both these Chapters of less ordinary use, and others of greatest excellency, and most profitable for our edification, and as we go, to prefix before them, with our pen, a several mark: as for example; before the former sort, this *; before the other, this ★, or some such like: that we may readily choose the one upon the

⁷⁵ Sherman, *Used Books*, pp. 71- 86.

⁷⁶ *Loci communes* was first published in 1521 and went through eighteen publications by 1525. See Sherman, *Used Books*, p. 75.

⁷⁷ Sherman, *Used Books*, p. 75.

extraordinary occasions, and more seldom read the other in our ordinary course.⁷⁸

For Downname, it did not matter if the reader used the method he described; what mattered was that the reader marked those passages that might come in handy in times of spiritual duress.⁷⁹ Following what appeared to be the common purpose recommended and often found in the books that he could have read, Nehemiah deployed his own creative drawing of the manicule in order to identify what he perceived as important in the material he copied from other books and various unnamed sources. The following passage from Nehemiah's earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance' provides an example of this practice.

That in the year of our Lord 1625 It pleased God to send among us in this city and the suburbs: such a plague (for our sins and abominations) that there died in one week in August 5205 and □ from the 6 of January to the twenty seven of October fifty three thousand two hundred sixty and five.⁸⁰

There were at least two possible sources for the figures in this passage. One possible source for the number '5205' comes from an engraving on a broadside printed sometime in the 1620s that bore a similar title as that given by Nehemiah to the manuscript he recorded it in. The title of the broadside was *To the glory of god in thankfull remembrance of our three great deliverances unto eternal memory* (1627).⁸¹ Interestingly, the same engraving was also used to illustrate a book by Michael Sparke called *Crumms of Comfort* (1629). Sparke's book provided a more

⁷⁸ John Downname, *A guide to godliness or a Treatise of a Christian life*, (London, 1622), pp. 648 – 649.

⁷⁹ Downname, *A guide to godliness*, p. 631.

⁸⁰ GL MS 204, fols. 407-408; Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 57-58.

⁸¹ *To the glory of God in thankful remembrance of our three great deliverances unto eternal memory, is here described*, (London, 1627). Reproduced in Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 262.

comprehensive set of figures regarding the fatalities caused by the plague.⁸²

Nehemiah recorded this fuller set of figures in his third extant manuscript, 'A Bundle of Mercies'.⁸³ Despite the inability to locate the exact source for the figures Nehemiah recorded in the above passage, his use of the manicule draws the reader's attention to the devastating impact of the pestilence. Whose eyes Nehemiah had in mind is debatable; it is highly probable that he was thinking of his own eyes, but it is not improbable that he was also thinking about others who might read his manuscripts.

Nehemiah's intention to write for a reader other than himself was particularly evident in the creative way he seemed to copy and splice together 'places' of knowledge from several different sources in order to discuss a specific theme or point-of-view. For example, in writing about an outbreak of a plague that struck London in 1625/26 in his earliest extant manuscript, Nehemiah seemed to combine at least four possible sources in order to provide, as he put it, 'comfort to those that suffer the grievousness of the plague'. One book, in particular, a collection of sermons that were previously preached in London, bore a striking resemblance to Nehemiah's manuscript: William Gouge's *God's three arrows plague, famine, sword* (1631).⁸⁴ In this book, Gouge not only referenced the same Bible verse that Nehemiah copied into his manuscript in his attempt to console the afflicted, but also deployed similar language in the title as that found in Nehemiah's own comments.⁸⁵ In his manuscript, Nehemiah wrote, 'The ordinary judgments of which the Lord bringeth

⁸² Michael Sparke, *Crumms of comfort, with godly prayers*, (London, 1629). See also Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, pp. 258-260, for details on the engraving.

⁸³ BL MS 21935, fol. 13.

⁸⁴ William Gouge, *God's three arrows plague, famine, sword, in three treatises. I. A plaister for the plague. II. Dearths death. III. The Churches conquest over the sword*, (London, 1631).

⁸⁵ Additional references to God's three arrows that were printed around the same time as Gouge's book were Thomas Jackson's *A treatise containing the original of unbelief, misbelief, or mispersuasions concerning the veritie, unity and attributes of the Deity with directions for rectifying our belief or knowledge in the fore-mentioned parts*, (London, 1625), p. 386. Similar language was also found in John Brinsley's *The third part of the true watch containing the call of the Lord....Taken out of the vision of Ezekiel, chap. 9*, (London, 1622), p. 108.

upon a land or a nation are especially three, war, famine, and pestilence. All these are sharp arrows which the Lord shooteth out against us for our sins'. Nehemiah then copied Jeremiah 14:12 into his manuscript, 'Of all these the prophet Jeremiah speaketh when they fast, I will not hear their cry and when they offer burn offerings I will not accept them, but I will consume them by the sword and by the famine, and by the pestilence (Jeremiah 14:12)'. Gouge referred to Jeremiah 14:12 on page three hundred forty nine.⁸⁶ Following this passage, Nehemiah then copied from another text or collection of texts that explained how the plague progressed in the body through outward signs and symptoms. He did not identify these texts, nor are those texts easily identifiable, but wrote that after the illness

hath little and little overcome nature, being not longer able to withstand the force thereof, it doth as a captain having won a city spread his Banners. So this cruel Tyrant, when it hath gotten mastery, displays his Ensigns on our bodies. He fills the skin full of spots as the tokens of death, which at the first are red showing his cruelty, then they are bluish, showing death to approach.⁸⁷

There were several texts from which Nehemiah could have copied this description of the symptoms of plague. For example, he could have copied from Stephen Bradwell's *A watch-man for the pest Teaching the true rules of preservation from the pestilent contagion* (1625). In his book, Bradwell described in similar language as that found in Nehemiah's manuscript, that an outbreak of carbuncles from plague were displayed 'by the colors of these bloody Ensigns', which 'play the Herald'. The 'tokens' of the illness, according to Bradwell, were 'spots of the bigness of flea-bitings, some bigger, some as big as a penny'. 'In color', Bradwell wrote, 'they are for the most part of a pale blue, but sometimes also purple or blackish, circled with a reddish circle'.⁸⁸ He could have found the same information in Ambroise Pare's *A treatise of the plague*

⁸⁶ Gouge, *God's three arrows plague, famine, sword*, p. 349.

⁸⁷ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 378 – 379. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 53.

⁸⁸ Stephen Bradwell, *A watch-man for the pest Teaching the true rules of preservation from the pestilent contagion*, (London, 1625), pp. 50 – 51.

containing the causes, signs, symptoms, prognostics, and cure thereof (1630).⁸⁹ It was possible though that Nehemiah combined several passages and words from more medically based texts like Bradwell's and Pare's with other theologically oriented texts to create an original passage.⁹⁰ After all, more than terrible symptoms, he interpreted the painful effects of the plague as 'the just judgment of God', an interpretation he elaborated on through works that were easily recognizable. In continuing his discussion of the plague, and the heavy toll the illness took in families and among friends, Nehemiah wrote,

But we come again to the state of this city. In the daytime what else hear we almost but Bells ringing of Knells and in the night season (when we should take our rest) we are interrupted by the continual tolling of passing Bells, and anon the ringing out of the same. In the day time also how many both men and women have <been seen> suddenly sink down in the streets, and there draw their last breaths, yea some of them of good rank and fashion.⁹¹

Nehemiah did not identify the source for this passage, but he does appear to have copied it from an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Lachrymae Londinsenses* (1626).⁹² The main subject of *Lachrymae Londinsense* (1626) had mainly to do with prayers and admonitions for government officials and wealthy citizens who fled the city during the visitation of the illness. According to the writer of the pamphlet, even though these citizens had fled the city they could not avoid judgment: 'Let not rich Citizens by fleeing (unless they likewise flee from their sins) think to escape scot-free: so long as they carry their sins with them, the Lord will find them out, and his hand will reach them wheresoever they are'.⁹³ The main thesis of *Lachrymae Londinsenses* (1626), in other words, was that the threat of death from plague was a

⁸⁹ Ambroise Pare's *A treatise of the plague containing the causes, signs, symptoms, prognostics, and cure thereof*, (London, 1630).

⁹⁰ In the narrative of his suicide attempts, from 1618 to 1623, Nehemiah would express some awareness of medical theories related to melancholy. See pp. 187 – 195 of this thesis.

⁹¹ GL MS 204, fols. 379-380; Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 54-55.

⁹² Booy recognized this source in *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 53, n. 197. Compare the passage in Wallington's manuscript with Anon., *Lachrymae Londinsenses*, (London, 1626), pp. 5 – 7.

⁹³ Anon., *Lachrymae Londinsenses*, p. 2.

token of God's judgment for sin that no one could escape by running away from a geographical location.⁹⁴ Yet, this was not the only message Nehemiah wanted to convey about the outbreak of plague. To *Lachrymae Londinsenses* (1626), he also copied a paragraph from a printed sermon written by Robert Abbot entitled *Bee thankfull London and Her Sisters* (1626).⁹⁵ According to Abbot, the people of London were to be thankful for the plague, as it was a reminder of God's goodness. The plague was a way for God to 'put his people in mind of the favours he hath done unto them'; it was a call to those still living to repent, to live differently in a manner that praised God with their lives. In Abbot's opinion, God had been kind to the people of London, and indeed all of England, but they had forgotten about him by committing acts of sin such as swearing, drunkenness, adultery and fornication, pride, 'fullness of bread', and 'contempt of the poor'. It was because of his goodness to them in the past and their sinful deeds after that goodness that, in Abbot's opinion, God had swept many thousands away 'as the Dongue of the streets'. The proper response to the plague, though, was not fear, dread, or flight, but gratitude. The outbreak of plague was not evidence of God's vengeance, but of his kindness. Quoting Psalm 31:21, Abbot wrote, 'We may justly say Blessed be the Lord for he hath showed marvelous kindness towards us in this our city'.⁹⁶ The reference to Psalm 31 appeared to be a call for the people of England to respond to the plague by trusting in the Lord. Even in affliction, the Psalmist wrote in 31:7 that he would rejoice in God's love. God was indeed being kind to the people of England, in Abbot's opinion, in sending the plague, because it was a call to return to the Lord's love for them. Through all of these texts, then, Nehemiah had creatively described the plague as a terrible and painful illness

⁹⁴ GL MS 204, fol. 379; Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 53.

⁹⁵ Booy recognized this source in *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 54 n. 203.

⁹⁶ GL MS 204, fol. 379; Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 54; Robert Abbot, *Bee thankfull London and her sisters*, (London, 1626), pp. 1-2, 6, 20-22.

that was sent by God as an inescapable judgment for sin for all people, but also exhorted his reader to find comfort in the idea that God had enacted such judgment as a way to remind them of the Lord's 'marvelous kindness' and divine love.

Nehemiah seemed especially attentive to what his readers needed to gain from the material he recorded in his manuscripts, which was revealed by his efforts to draw out practical, pietistic observations. This was a common practice throughout his manuscripts and one he frequently signaled for the reader by the words 'observations' or 'uses'. For example, in his second extant manuscript, Nehemiah gathered and recorded several anecdotes that told of individuals who died suddenly. After his record these anecdotes, Nehemiah listed four 'uses' that he believed the reader should discern from them. Each of these 'uses' consisted of two parts: first, a practical application, and, second, a Biblical passage or verse that seemed to serve as a source of inspiration for that reflection. Sometimes these 'uses' that Nehemiah discerned from the anecdotes he replicated in his manuscripts were original to him; at other times the 'uses' were copied from the original text. He could also blend 'uses' or 'observations' that were original to him and those he found in other sources. When Nehemiah reproduced (in his second extant manuscript) the story of a great fire that destroyed almost all of Carfax, a village near Oxford, he transcribed three of the five 'observations' taken from a news pamphlet while two of the five 'uses' appeared to be based upon his own reflections and examination.⁹⁷

Another indication that Nehemiah intended to write for readers was in his use of dates. The use of dates was possibly just as important for Nehemiah as it was for any reader. Dating could have provided Nehemiah with a way to organize his writing

⁹⁷ BL MS 1457, fols. 16 -17. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 99 – 100. Nehemiah copied the story of the great fire at Carfax from two news pamphlets, *Mercurius civicus* (3 – 10 October 1644) and *The Scottish Dove* (4 – 11 October 1644). The three observations he copied into his manuscript from a different source were taken from *Mercurius civicus*. Booy has identified the two sources that Nehemiah based his report on in *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 99 n. 11.

and the massive amount of material from which he copied. Nehemiah wrote in several of his seven extant manuscripts over the course of many years. He also seems to have collected printed sources that he held onto for very long periods of time – one even wonders, based on his testimony, if he ever threw printed sources away. At one point in his manuscripts, Nehemiah expressed astonishment and shame over the amount of reading material he gathered and kept in his home, especially news pamphlets. In February 1642, he confessed in his fourth extant manuscript, ‘The Growth of a Christian’, that he found ‘so many of these little pamphlets of weekly news about my house I thought they were so many thieves that had stole away my money before I was aware of them’. He admitted that the sight of so many news pamphlets ‘cast me into some sad thought: to think that I should be so unwise to cast so much money away’, especially as it was, according to his manuscript, ‘so dead a time of trading and hard time of getting’. He then consoled himself with the thought ‘as for these pamphlets that I buy I do gather out the chief heads (which I think will most abound God’s glory) and so write them down for the generations to come that they may see what God hath done that they may put their trust in God and the children unborn may stand up and praise the Lord and talk of his wondrous works’.⁹⁸ Of course, the obsession with which Nehemiah collected news pamphlets in the later months of 1641 and early months of 1642 was probably due events reported in the news. In 1642, England was reeling from strife caused by Civil War. Nehemiah also noted that part of the news he was recording for those future ‘generations’ included ‘poor bleeding Ireland’.⁹⁹ Irish Catholics had started a rebellion in the early autumn of 1641. More than just news pamphlets, though, evidence suggests that Nehemiah also kept books, or at least had access to the same books for many years. He also borrowed books, so

⁹⁸ BL MS 40883, fols. 15 – 16. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 156 – 157. This is possibly a paraphrase of Psalms 22 and 107.

⁹⁹ BL MS 40883, fol. 16. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 157.

not everything he read remained in his possession. This was revealed when he was accused of not only reading, but also printing and distributing books that had been censored by the Star Chamber. In his examination before the Chamber for this charge, Nehemiah confessed that he had read the books but only borrowed them.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that he likely held on to books and perhaps even read them, repeatedly. This is manifest in his sixth extant manuscript, entitled ‘Copies of Profitable and Comfortable Letters’, written in 1650, which is comprised entirely of letters, some of which are personal, but some of which are published in books in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. For example, Nehemiah copied several letters from John Foxe’s *Acts and monuments* (1610).¹⁰⁰ Foxe’s book had likely been passed down to Nehemiah from his father, or was a family heirloom to which Nehemiah had open access. (Nehemiah’s father died in 1638, twelve years before said manuscript.) *Acts and monuments* (1610) had been a particular favorite of his mother’s, Elizabeth Wallington, who died in 1603, when Nehemiah was only five years old. In the document written by Nehemiah’s father and copied by Nehemiah into his earliest extant manuscript, ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance’, Elizabeth was described as being ‘very rich and perfect in all the stories of the Bible, likewise in all the stories of the Martyrs, and could readily turn to them’. Foxe’s book was popularly known as the ‘book of the martyrs’.¹⁰¹ In his accumulation and attempt to copy from this massive amount of material those places of knowledge he found interesting or important, Nehemiah almost always included the year of the event he was writing about in his manuscript. This was true even for those letters he copied from books like Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* (1610). This was surely helpful for him in order to keep track of those sources that he used, especially

¹⁰⁰ BL MS 922, fols. 7r – 22r.

¹⁰¹ GL MS 204, fol. 474. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 88.

if he wanted to go back and find a particular source that related to a particular experience or event from a particular year. It was also possibly helpful for the reader who was interested in a certain year or certain event.¹⁰² With Nehemiah's supply of dates for the material he recorded, the reader could look for the year in which a known event occurred.

More than organization and a reference tool, the use of dates probably served an intellectual and literary function, and reflected Nehemiah's ambition to write in the same style and method that he found in printed books of history, news books, and pamphlets. Like many of those writers whose works were printed, Nehemiah had a keen interest in history. This was possibly due to his theological convictions – all of history, for Nehemiah, revealed God's will in acts of judgment and mercy. It was not up to man, in Nehemiah's opinion, to speculate on whether God was right or wrong in those acts, but to observe those acts and respond accordingly with either thankfulness or repentance, but, above all, with greater piety. 'Gentle reader', Nehemiah wrote in the prefatory letter at the start of his second extant manuscript, 'A Memorial of God's Judgments upon Sabbath breakers, Drunkards and other vile livers', 'I thought good to take notice of the hand of God now amongst us... thus we should do that God may have the glory and praise'.¹⁰³ 'A Memorial of God's Judgments upon Sabbath breakers, Drunkards and other vile livers', along with his third extant manuscript, 'A Bundle of Mercies', and his fifth extant manuscript, 'A Record of Mercies continued, or yet God is good to Israel', were filled with historical anecdotes that Nehemiah perceived as revealing instances God's mercy or divine judgment. In his record of

¹⁰² Many Puritan authors pressed upon their readers the importance of learning from the lives of individuals and from events that occurred in the past. This was obviously the purpose of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. However, there were others who copied this style. On the popularity of 'historical studies' among early modern Protestants, see Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 131 – 134.

¹⁰³ BL MS 1457, fol. 3r. Part of this quote is found in Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 97.

these anecdotes, Nehemiah included a date either in the body of the text itself, or across the top of the folio and sometimes at the beginning of a new section. The dating of God's providential acts in his manuscripts, however, was not necessarily simply a reflection of his theology. It could have also been his attempt to mimic books that were similar in use of historical anecdotes. For example, in the George Carleton's book *A Thankful Remembrance of God's Mercy In an Historical Collection of the great and merciful Deliverances of the church and State of England* (1630) (which bore a similar title to Nehemiah's first extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance') the year for historical events was printed in the margins.¹⁰⁴ Locating the date of when certain events occurred in history was also significant in devotional books Nehemiah read and copied from, like Lewis Bayly's *The practice of piety* (1613). Nehemiah copied several historical anecdotes from Bayly's book into his third extant manuscript, 'A Bundle of God's Mercies'.¹⁰⁵ The most obvious source, however, that Nehemiah could have mimicked the habit of including dates with the material he copied from was the news books and pamphlets that he surrounded himself with in the writing of the more historically themed manuscripts like 'A Memorial of God's Judgments', 'A Bundle of Mercies', and 'A Record of Mercies continued, or yet God is good to Israel'.¹⁰⁶

In a similar manner to his use of dates, Nehemiah deployed headers and sub-headers in his manuscripts in order to separate topics or themes. A broad topic or theme could characterize an entire manuscript – for instance, some manuscripts seem to be more personal than others; some more concentrated on politics, while others on

¹⁰⁴ George Carleton, *A thankfull remembrance of Gods mercy. In an historicall collection of the great and mercifull deliverances of the church and state of England, since the gospel began here to flourish, from the beginning of Queen Elizabeth*, (London, 1630).

¹⁰⁵ Compare BL MS 21935, fols. 41 – 42, with Lewis Bayly, *The practice of piety*, pp. 548 – 553.

¹⁰⁶ For an example of this evidence, see pp. 89 – 90 in this thesis and Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 101 n. 23, 129, n. 95, and 230 n. 103.

his preparation for the Lord's Supper. These broader topics or themes were, in large part, indicated by the titles that Nehemiah gave to a manuscript, like 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance', or 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of All My Writing Books'. However, Nehemiah frequently divided these broader topic or themes found in the title into several subtopics or sub-themes, which he alerted his reader to by headers and sub-headers. The use of headers was another way of structuring a text in order to make it easier to read that Nehemiah probably copied from the printed authors of his day. It was also a method, similar to dates, which helped Nehemiah and his reader remember certain sections or a text or search a text by way of an abridgement regarding specific topics or events.¹⁰⁷ A single manuscript could have several sections divided by sub-headers. These headers could be very short and provide little information in regards to the material that followed, or lengthy and very descriptive. The use different types of headers is particularly evident in manuscripts like 'A Memorial of God's Judgments upon Sabbath breakers, Drunkards and other vile livers'; 'A Bundle of Mercies'; and, 'A Record of Mercies continued, or yet God is good to Israel'. These manuscripts consist mainly of moral anecdotes, from which Nehemiah drew practical, pietistic observations, but also copies of lengthy excerpts that he copied from news books or pamphlets. Shorter or more concise headers are evidenced by the following examples, taken from his third extant manuscript, 'A Bundle of Mercies': 'Heavy Times with the poor Children of God'; 'Remarkable Judgments of God'; 'Of the bitterness of war'.¹⁰⁸ Longer more descriptive sub-headers are evident in the following examples taken from the same manuscript: 'A fearful Judgment of God which was showed on the parish church of Widecombe in Devonshire being a very fair church, newly trimmed having a very fair

¹⁰⁷ On the use of headers in printed books, see Green, *Print and Protestantism*, pp. 138 – 142.

¹⁰⁸ BL MS 21935, fols, 21, 27, and 178 – 180.

Tower with great and small pinnacles one of the famous Towers in the west part of England’, or like this one, taken from his second extant manuscript, ‘A Memorial of God’s Judgments’: ‘An little Emblem of the great day of Judgment represented in the sudden Blowing up, and fearful Burning of many Houses with the unexpected death of many persons’.¹⁰⁹ The longer, more descriptive headers, like the latter, were frequently reflective of Nehemiah’s use of one newsbook or pamphlet in the material that followed rather than a collection of anecdotes. The section that fell under the header regarding the church in Widecombe-in-the-Moor was taken from a news pamphlet that bore a similar title, ‘A second and most exact relation of those sad and lamentable accidents, which happened in and about the Parish Church of Wydecombe near the Dartmoores in Devonshire, on Sunday the 21 of October last, 1638’.¹¹⁰

An intentionality that went beyond merely Nehemiah’s own mental and emotional needs is certainly not always easy to discern in his manuscripts. There are passages that seemed to relate only to matters regarding his personal life. Oftentimes one finds passages like this one, wherein Nehemiah recorded in his earliest extant manuscript the details of a business transaction that occurred in his shop on ‘Saturday, being the 25 of June’, in 1631. According to Nehemiah’s account this transaction, a ‘Brother Daniel’ (meaning a brother in the sense of a Christian brother, not a biological brother or brother by marriage) ‘brought (him) so much ware as came to above five pound’. This was a significant amount of money for Nehemiah, and he worried how he would pay the bill. He wrote that he ‘knew not what to do and (was) full of care’ as to how he would find the funds. However, he soon rejoiced in the ‘goodness of God’ towards him ‘in raising (him) up friends to help’. That night, his

¹⁰⁹ BL MS 21935, fol. 27 (16r); BL MS 1457, fol. 171 (88r). These sub-headers are also found in Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 103 and 117.

¹¹⁰ *A second and most exact relation of those sad and lamentable accidents which happened in and about the parish church of Wydecombe near the Dartmoores, in Devonshire, on Sunday the 21 of October last, 1638*, (London, 1638).

‘loving Father asked’ him if he ‘had got money to pay’ for the goods. Nehemiah replied that he had ‘been about to get some (money), but could not’. His father then told him how another Christian brother by the name of Church (this was probably the cousin mentioned earlier in this chapter) had sent him ten shillings and four pound, which according to Nehemiah’s testimony in his manuscript, ‘did rejoice my heart and ease my mind of many cares’.¹¹¹ Nehemiah wrote that lending of this money relieved him of having to feel ‘disturbed’ on the Sabbath day. His gratitude for this gesture also caused him to record this prayer into his manuscript: may ‘the Lord of his mercy reward him (Brother Church) a hundrethfold and refresh him as he hath refreshed me’. Nehemiah continued to reflect in his manuscript on ‘this mercy of God’ toward him, and in the midst of that reflection came under spiritual assaults of the devil, who said unto him, ‘O if thou hadest prayed unto God in this thy need thou wouldst have boasted and said that God helpeth thee still when thou prayest unto him but now thou seest it commeth as well without prayer as with prayer’. He confessed that this thought from the devil did make him ‘unthankful’ and drove ‘me from prayer at another time, which did much trouble for the present and make me very sad’. He quickly recovered, however, and proclaimed in his manuscript, ‘Oh the goodness of my God which (never tarieth long from me) did bring my mind that place in Isaiah 65:24, where he saith Before they call I will Answer and while they speak I will hear’. Nehemiah declared that ‘this place did much comfort and cheer me: for I had many ejaculations unto the Lord before, although I did not go privately on my knees to God in holy prayer’. The recording of this episode in his manuscript seemed to express the same ‘ejaculatory’ need as the prayers he claimed went up to God during the ordeal. It is difficult to see, therefore, how such a record was made with much intentionality

¹¹¹ On his cousin Church, see pp. 69 – 70 of this thesis.

and not out of a need simply to purge himself of the disturbed feelings he felt or the evil thoughts that he attributed to the devil.¹¹²

Perhaps the most important anchor that holds all of the material that Nehemiah recorded into manuscripts together as part of an intentional strategy, and suggests the presence of a much larger purpose than his own mental and emotional needs, were the prefatory letters or notes to the reader found at the beginning of all his extant manuscripts. In his earliest extant manuscript, ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance’, and indeed in all of his extant manuscripts, Nehemiah addressed his audience with a letter addressed ‘To the Christian Reader’ or ‘To the Reader’. Providing a prefatory letter to the reader was a common feature within the published literature Nehemiah read. It was highly probable, therefore, that in his attempt to assert himself as an equally gifted writer as those who were being printed he copied this practice. The effect of this practice, at least for Nehemiah, however, is the way those letters direct his reader to what he expected them to learn from each of his extant manuscript. In these letters, Nehemiah introduced the reader to the purpose of the manuscript. For example, in ‘A Record of Gods Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance’, Nehemiah told his reader, ‘And here I have taken notice of Gods grate mercies in pulling me out as a firebrand from the burning and in delivering me from so many fearful temptations and many other mercies the Lord hath bestowed upon me which I have written down: because my memory is so bade to remember that which is good and when that I read of them my heart may be the more stirred up unto thankfulness and to walk more obediently to God’s holy will...’¹¹³ Here we see, through an allusion to the ‘firebrand’ mentioned in Amos 4:11 or Zechariah 3:2, that Nehemiah was directing his reader to see that the main purpose of his earliest extant

¹¹² GL MS 204, fols. 438 – 439. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 73.

¹¹³ GL MS 204, fols. xiv-xv; Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 31.

manuscript would be his deliverance from evil temptations and many other situations. In his letter 'To the Christian Reader' in his third extant manuscript, 'A Bundle of Mercies', he made it clear that in 'seeing sin in such a high manner abound' that he wanted to show 'you', the reader how God had delivered England through such historic difficulties instead of punishing them. 'Behold', Nehemiah wrote, while other nations had been 'destroyed' for such impious behavior, God 'hath spared us'.¹¹⁴ For 'The Growth of a Christian', he simply informed his reader in a note that his purpose was to show 'the fruit and Benefit that (through the mercy of God) I gain by the Sacrament, which here I take notice of it that I and all others might be encouraged to go to it as often as occasion is offered'.¹¹⁵ Because these letters and notes are found in all of his extant writings, it is probably safe to assume that such epistles to the reader were included in all of his manuscripts.

Nehemiah's address to his reader in letters or notes at the front of his manuscripts could be said to have epitomized his ambition to be perceived as a writer, much like any author whose books may have been printed in the seventeenth century. Through these letters or notes, Nehemiah expressed an awareness of his purpose and intention in writing for an audience. Thus, his manuscripts seem to have been more than a product of impulse or an irrepressible desire to put his thoughts down on paper. That these epistles were probably recorded at the beginning of all of his manuscripts reinforces the notion that an intentional strategy to write for others had guided him from the start of his very first 'book', which he called 'The Widow's Mite' in order to suggest that his writings were just as good as those works one might find in the great 'treasury' of God's wisdom. More than this, though, the letters or notes at the front his manuscripts appeared to signal his interest in writing itself, which is not to say that

¹¹⁴ BL MS 21935, fol. 1.

¹¹⁵ BL MS 40883, fol. 4r. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 147.

he was uninterested in his own thoughts and personal experiences. As will be argued in the next chapter, the narrative of his stepsiblings' death in 1609 - an experience that Nehemiah identified as the initial source for his inspiration to write - also revealed a deep and significant intellectual concern that would motivate his pursuit of knowledge in books and other possible sources for many years to come.

Chapter Three

Nehemiah's struggles with self-reform, 1609 - 1618

Nehemiah's narrative of his stepsiblings' death in 1609 revealed more than the inspiration for his early attempts at writing; it also laid bare his understanding of that tragedy and his efforts to respond by trying to reform his life.¹ As was stated in the previous chapter, Nehemiah noted in his narrative that it was 'God (that) had visited (his) Father's house with sickness'. His subsequent promise to 'the Lord' to 'have a care over (his) ways and do better than (he) had done' in order to return to his 'Father's house', therefore, reflected his view of the ordeal as a divine punishment or discipline for sin. This perspective was also evident in his decision to keep a daybook of his sins. By practicing self-examination and keeping a record of his sinful behavior, Nehemiah communicated through his narrative that he believed he could fulfill his promise to God by conforming his life to a godlier pattern – sin was something about himself that he could correct or control by performing what he referred to as 'holy duties'.² Nehemiah described how he soon encountered trouble with this approach.³ Four decades later, after a lifetime immersed in the study of the Bible and other books, he interpreted the cause of his trouble as the result of an inherited 'condition': it was his inner, sinful nature that kept him from reforming his life, or – as he put it – he could not conform his life to a godlier pattern because 'the ways of man is not in himself'.⁴ In this interpretation of his intrinsic insufficiency he paraphrased Jeremiah

¹ On the death of Nehemiah's stepsibling's and his first attempts at writing, see pp. 56 – 57 of this thesis.

² For an explanation of what 'holy duties' meant to Nehemiah, see pp. 68 – 69 of this thesis. Suffice it to say at this point, 'holy duties' were pietistic practices that involved Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance.

³ See pp. 62– 63 of this thesis.

⁴ On Nehemiah's interpretation of his sinful condition, see pp. 64 – 65 of this thesis.

10:23, a verse that, in the context of that book in the Bible, was part of a prayer. In Jeremiah 10, the prophet warned that God was about to judge the people of Israel with fatal wounds and incurable diseases because they had turned from him in order to worship idols from other nations. Some in Israel would complain of this judgment, lamenting that such divine punishment would take away their children. In response to this complaint, Jeremiah offered a prayer that contained the statement: ‘the ways of man is not in himself’. The prophet interpreted this statement by declaring that it was not up to man to direct his own steps, and invited God to judge him, but not in anger lest he be completely destroyed. Thus, through Jeremiah 10:23, Nehemiah appeared to communicate his belief that, in the wake of his stepsiblings death in 1609, he had failed to understand that the reformation of his ways could only come by accepting the guidance and correction of God. What is more, based on the wider context of Jeremiah 10, it was a reformation that could only come by the experience of suffering in his body. Of course, Nehemiah’s reference to Jeremiah 10 came forty years after 1609. So, the question that remains is this: what did he understand about conforming his life to a godlier pattern in 1609 that differed from this later perspective?⁵

The purpose of this chapter is to become clearer about those ideas that caused Nehemiah to react to his stepsiblings’ death with an effort to reform his life from within rather than trusting in, as he put it, the ‘ways of man’ that were not within him. It is a purpose that will be carried out, primarily, by briefly reconstructing the literary culture in which Nehemiah inhabited, and explaining the reading practices in early modern society that he appeared to reflect. The previous chapter examined how Nehemiah’s attempts to reform his life started (in 1609) with an urge or compulsion to keep a written record of his sins, as well as a strong interest in reading. He also

⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 3 – 4. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 266 – 267.

confessed to frequently attending church (as he put it) ‘often on the weekdays’.⁶ Therefore, some attention will be given to sermons that were preached in London from 1609 to 1618. The early method applied by Nehemiah to his efforts at reform did change in 1619 – 1620, with his formation of an intentional strategy to write ‘books’; a method of reading that involved looking for specific ‘places’; and taking notes from the sermons that he heard. This later method, though, was part of a larger pietistic purpose to keep his ‘promise’ to God ‘to be better’ which was fuelled by previous years spent in reading and listening to sermons. The question that guides this chapter is: what was Nehemiah trying to accomplish in his attempts fulfill that ‘promise’ and ‘be better’ before initiating his intentional strategy in 1619, and what were those sources that caused him to seek that reform in the manner that he did? An answer to this question seems critical, as the method of reform that he pursued not only led to a more focused approach in his writing, reading, and listening habits, but also to his temptations to run away and commit suicide from 1618 to 1623.⁷

The problem with pursuing the objective of this chapter – of becoming clearer about those ideas that caused Nehemiah to react to his stepsiblings’ death with an effort to reform his life from 1609 to 1618 – is the paucity of evidence and specificity in his extant manuscripts. Nehemiah described his efforts to reform after his stepsiblings’ death forty-five years later in a narrative found in the early folios of his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of All my Writing Books’. He provided very little information in this narrative about what ideas drove him to pursue reform in the manner that he did, or where those ideas may have originated. He testified to reading the Bible and to having in his possession a copy of John Brinsley’s *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615), but only noted that he had

⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267. See also p. 62 of this thesis.

⁷ Nehemiah’s suicide attempts will be the subject of the next chapter of this thesis.

‘many other good books given’ to him.⁸ As stated above, he also confessed to frequently attending church, but did not include the names of preachers or titles of sermons. Because of this silence in the narrative from his last extant manuscript, it is impossible to identify with certainty what printed materials and sermons Nehemiah actually read or heard.

The lack of evidence and specificity in Nehemiah’s extant manuscripts regarding what he read in books or heard in sermons does not negate the possibility of examining the ideas that caused him to pursue a particular method of reform from 1609 to 1618. What is demanded for such an examination is a consideration of the culture and society in which he claimed to have read books and listened to sermons. Reading patterns and church attendance in early modern England have been scrutinized by scholars in recent years; so too has the history of the book and book trade, as well as the significance and popularity of scribal practices. Some of these studies have emphasized that a lack of notation or record of what an individual read in a personal notebook was not the only indicator that he or she read a text or engaged with ideas that originated in a printed source.⁹ Such evidence could also be found in the pages of a text itself - in marginalia or notes written on the printed materials. The used books or printed materials that contained these marginalia or written notes were then shared with others, friends and family members who belonged to the same social circle. In this way, an individual’s interpretation or perception of passages that he or she considered profound or significant were communicated to fellow readers.¹⁰ Other studies have emphasized how individuals gathered and discussed ideas from texts not simply in isolation or from private reading, but in the company of others. According to this argument, the act of reading was a social activity. Individuals read

⁸ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267. See also p. 62 of this thesis.

⁹ Sherman, *Used Books*, pp. 5 – 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

and discussed ideas in coffee houses, bookshops, at work, and with friends and family.¹¹ Often these settings and affiliations dictated the types of materials that were studied. In other words, readers, and especially those Protestant readers who were frustrated with the state of the Church in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, shared with and encouraged one another to read authors they deemed acceptable as a group. The same could be said about church attendance and gadding to particular preachers - frequently, a certain preacher attracted attention and the notoriety gained from that attention caused others to come and hear him. The popularity of these recommended authors and celebrated preachers inspired the proliferation of the message they proclaimed. This was done not only by word of mouth in social settings, but also through letters, handwritten copies of books and sermons, and increasingly, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, through a variety of printed materials.¹² In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century England, the confluence of several factors created an upsurge in the printing and selling of religious tracts, pamphlets, and treatises. These factors included changes in the governance and regulation of printers and copy holders; political and religious debates that took place in print; an increase in literacy rates; and simply a demand for reading material in the marketplace.¹³ Perhaps the most significant factor was a desire among Protestant authors to promulgate their message and their followers to better understand and follow its teachings that contributed to what N.H. Keeble has described as the ‘preponderance of works of homiletic, practical,

¹¹ On reading in coffee houses and bookshops and among family members, see Cambers, *Godly Reading*, pp. 84 – 86, 182 – 209.

¹² N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England*, (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 78 - 83.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 93 – 95. See also, John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 40 – 41.

devotional and casuistical divinity'.¹⁴ According to Keeble, the sale of these types of printed materials set a mark in the early seventeenth century that went unchallenged in the booksellers' catalogues for some time.¹⁵

The abundance and interpretation of printed texts, scribal activities, and the collective appraisal of and gadding to particular preachers in early modern England offers a framework for reconstructing how Nehemiah could have encountered the ideas that informed his early pietistic efforts, from 1609 to 1618. Thus, he may not have specified, in his extant manuscripts, what texts he read privately, preachers he heard, or conversations that he had with others, but he inhabited a culture and society, which constantly exposed him to ideas during this time. It is with this background in mind that this chapter will examine a sample of those texts and sermons that were available to him. Because Nehemiah identified himself and his social circle as 'Puritan', this sample will include those books and sermons that were written and preached by Puritan clergy.¹⁶ A portion of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559) will also be examined. Nehemiah's extant manuscripts offer no evidence that he read the *Institutes*, but others have argued that Calvin's theology was a significant influence on Puritan clergy.¹⁷ Finally, it is important to remember that Nehemiah, from all accounts, seems to have been a very conscious observer of the world. The ideas that influenced his attempts to reform could have come from anywhere. An awareness of this fact means that at least some attention should be given to other forms of cultural media: frontispieces and graphic representations, as well as cheap printed material that were available will also be examined. As it is

¹⁴ Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, p. 83.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ On Nehemiah's self-identification as a Puritan, see pp. 6 – 8 of this thesis.

¹⁷ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 81; N. R. N. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', *The Origins of the English Civil War*, Conrad Russell, ed., (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1973), pp. 119 – 134. See also Peter Lake, 'Calvinism and the English Church, 1570 – 1635', *Past & Present*, No. 114 (Feb. 1987), pp. 32 – 34.

impossible to demonstrate clearly what Nehemiah actually read or heard, it is hoped that the attention given to these other forms of media will further help in the reconstruction of the literary culture he inhabited and in describing the kinds of publications and sermons that he might have engaged with personally or in conversations with others.

For David Booy, an examination of the ideas found in Nehemiah's extant manuscripts reveals a struggle to construct identity or fashion a 'self' through an understanding and application of the Calvinist doctrines of 'conversion' and 'sanctification'.¹⁸ Booy defines this struggle as the pursuit of 'assurance of salvation' through several stages of experience.¹⁹ The first stage of this difficult quest involved an awareness of his sinful condition. The second stage was marked by a sense of dread of divine punishment. In the third stage, the individual sought to avert divine punishment through obedience to God's law. The last stage brought about a culmination or fulfillment of a 'heartfelt longing for the full redemptive power of God's grace'. The motivation to proceed along these stages, which took place primarily within the 'inner person' (so the argument goes) was the desperate search for a 'psychological phenomenon' - 'the gift of divine grace' – without a mental and emotional experience that brought an awareness of God's grace, this theory argues that the individual believed he or she was doomed to a life dominated by sin.¹³

In contrast to the theory above, this chapter will claim that Nehemiah's promise to God 'to reform' and 'do better' after his stepsiblings' death, in 1609,

¹⁸ According to Booy, Nehemiah's tendency toward 'introspection and self-evaluation' reflected the early modern Protestant consciousness of individual existence, which served as one of the 'formative influences on the development of the modern sense of self'. Nehemiah, in other words, perceived his possession of a unique individual 'essence' that was capable of change and manipulation, whether by his own efforts, or by the 'surrounding culture and its informing ideologies and beliefs'. See *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 12 – 13.

¹⁹ Scholars have commonly referred to this process as the 'order of salvation', which is divided into further sub-categories for theological analysis and discussion. Those sub-categories include justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. See Cohen, *God's Caress*, pp. 75 – 76.

¹³ David Booy, *The Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 14 – 15.

revealed his attempt to construct an identity or ‘self’ based upon ideas related to another Christian doctrine which John Calvin and his followers inherited from the later middle ages – the doctrine of mortification. While Nehemiah testified to his participation in an inner journey toward what he described as ‘the Lord Christ’ appearing to his soul ‘in strength and comfort’, this perspective came later in life, in reflection upon all of his manuscripts.²⁰ Moreover, he did not apply this perspective or identify which stage he was in when he attempted his reforms after his stepsiblings’ death. It seems necessary, therefore, to examine what he confessed to having attempted in this period (1609 to 1618) without assigning what appears to have been a more mature and sophisticated interpretive framework. Nehemiah did not use the words ‘mortify’ or ‘mortification’ to describe his efforts to reform. He did, nevertheless, employ a distinctive language in his narrative of those efforts, which suggested that his ‘promise’ to conform his life to a godlier pattern was driven by a concern to combat the sinful desires and behaviors produced by his body than the pursuit of divine grace. As noted in the previous chapter, the promise that Nehemiah made to God to conform his life to a godlier pattern did not necessarily signal the start of conversion, or a spiritual transition from the Covenant of Works to the Covenant of Grace. Such a promise could also simply mean a commitment to work harder in combating particular sins or sinful tendencies by adherence to religious duties.²¹ In regards to his own promise, Nehemiah wrote that he was particularly concerned with

²⁰ In his letter ‘To the Christian Reader’ in his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah wrote that by reading over all of his manuscripts he could see how his life moved through four parts. He confessed that in the first part of his life he ‘was in a most vile and sinful condition’. In the second part of his life, he ‘was in the sight of this my sinfulness, most sad and dismal with heavy temptations’. The third part consisted of ‘much prayers, strivings, and struggles against my corruptions, which were hard for me because I looked too much on myself and not upon Christ, therefore I could do nothing for the law kept me in bondage’. And, finally, in the latter or fourth part of his life ‘the Lord Christ hath appeared unto (his) soul in strength and comfort and filled (him) with much joy in the putting in my mouth new songs of praise and singing Hallelujahs unto him for ever and ever’. See FS MS V.a.436, fol. xi. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 265.

²¹ See p. 52 n. 5 of this thesis.

curbing ‘disobedience to his parents and quarreling and other sins’.²² Because this language reflected the latter type of pledge, it seems less probable that he had in mind the idea of conversion or a move from the Covenant of Works to the Covenant of Grace. The method by which Christian doctrine encouraged the pious to fight against their sin was articulated in the doctrine of mortification.

Another objective in this chapter is to examine the difference between Nehemiah’s early and later view of mortification. The fact that he identified a difference in his early view of reform when he wrote his last extant manuscripts by way of reference to Jeremiah 10:23 indicates a change or development in his perspective.²³ As the remaining chapters in this thesis will demonstrate, it is important to recognize Nehemiah’s ability to change and adjust his theology and approach to Puritan piety. Several factors could have contributed to the change in his view of mortification. As already discussed in the paragraphs above, the most significant factor probably centered on his reading and reflecting on the ideas that he encountered in books and sermons. For instance, his reception or ability to grasp the ideas presented in those mediums could have reflected maturity or lack maturity along with other factors that limited or increased his comprehension from one time to another. In other words, just because he read books about and listened to sermons on mortification in the years just after his stepsiblings’ death did not mean that he comprehended the ideas presented in those mediums. At the time of his stepsiblings’ death in 1609, Nehemiah was only eleven years old. Some scholars have argued that the attempt to understand the theology offered in books and sermons for adult laymen in late sixteenth and seventeenth century England was

²² FS MS V.a.436, fol. 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

²³ See p. 103 above, and FS MS V.a.436, fols. 3 – 4. Booy, *Notebooks... of Wallington*, pp. 266 – 267.

often a difficult and cumbersome task.²⁴ Therefore, what Nehemiah understood about the doctrine of mortification at eleven years of age and attempted to apply from that doctrine may have differed from what those authors and preachers intended. His efforts at reform after his stepsiblings' death, then, could have reflected the limits of his knowledge of the doctrine of mortification.

The important point to take away from the arguments of this chapter is that whatever Nehemiah's early understanding of mortification might have been, he later wrote that his failure to succeed in reducing his sinful desires and behaviors at that time caused his 'little conscience' to 'chide' him.²⁵ As the next chapter will demonstrate, the chiding of conscience lay at the root of Nehemiah's eleven temptations either to run away from home or commit suicide, from 1618 to 1623. The painful awareness that he was unable to establish or construct a 'self' that he believed was acceptable to God by controlling the sinful desires and actions produced by his body ultimately led to the temptation to negate his 'self' by self-murder.²⁶

Mortification had been interpreted in the Middle Ages (from Colossians 3:5) as the attempt to combat the sins of the flesh – indeed, to kill or mortify the natural, sinful desires produced by the body.²⁷ However, a more general and spiritual rendering of the doctrine of mortification in the later Middle Ages was found in the popular devotional manual, *The Imitation of Christ* (c. 1427), written by the late

²⁴ This is the main theme of chapter two in *The Art of Hearing*, which discusses the challenges that late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Protestant preachers faced in conveying their message to congregations: see especially pp. 63 – 64, 72, and 108. See also Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress*, p. 188. On the difficult texts that laymen such as Wallington could have read and attempted to understand and apply to his life, see Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, pp. 114 - 117.

²⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

²⁶ This conclusion echoes what Stephen Dobranski has suggested in his study of reading in early modern England: 'Reading during the seventeenth century could be part of the solution or part of the problem, able either to promote understanding or to provoke sometimes dangerous passions'. See Stephen Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 45.

²⁷ See Guy-Marie Oury, 'Mortification', in Richard Barrie Dobson, *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, Andre Vauchez and Michael Lapidge, eds., Adrian Walford, trans., (Cambridge: J. Clarke & Co., 2000), p. 987.

medieval monk, Thomas à Kempis (c. 1380 – 1471).²⁸ In this book, à Kempis advised other monks that, historically, ‘some of the saints became so perfect in the prayer of contemplation’ because of ‘their continual study and endeavor to mortify earthly desires, and abstract themselves from worldly concerns, that being free from perturbation, they might adhere to God with all the powers of the soul’. In contrast to these revered saints of the past, à Kempis claimed that he and his fellow monks

were too much engaged with our own passions, and too tenderly affected by the business and pleasures of this transitory life, to be capable of such high attainments, nay, so fixed are our spirits in slothfulness and cold indifference that we seldom overcome so much as one evil habit.²⁹

The goal of mortification, according to à Kempis, was to free themselves from their ‘own passions’, ‘business’, and ‘pleasures’: to become ‘perfectly dead to ourselves, and free from all inward entanglement, that we might have some relish for divine enjoyments, and begin to experience the blessedness of heavenly contemplation’. For à Kempis, ‘the principle, if not the only impediment’ to attaining such a goal was the individual’s continual ‘subjection to violent passions and inordinate desires without making an effort to enter in the narrow way, which Christ has pointed out as the one way of perfection for all the saints of God’. The lack of control over the passions and inordinate desires produced by the body, à Kempis argued, was particularly evident ‘when adversity comes upon us’. When adversity comes, wrote à Kempis, he and his fellow monks fell quickly into despair and sought solace in external religious

²⁸ C. Cullman, ‘Life of Thomas à Kempis’, in Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, John Payne trans., Howard Malcolm ed., (Boson: Gould and Lincoln, 1856), p. 29. The edition of *The Imitation of Christ* referred to in this chapter is a reprint of an eighteenth century imprint which was collated with a Latin version published in Antwerp in 1600. See Howard Malcolm, ‘Preface’, in Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, John Payne trans., Howard Malcolm ed., p. vi. Scholars continue to debate the exact date for authorship for *The Imitation*, but generally contend that à Kempis wrote manuscript around forty-seven years of age. The first English translation of the text appeared in 1460. The first printed English translation appeared in 1502. For a brief history of the printing of *The Imitation of Christ* in England, see Harold C. Gardiner, ‘Introduction’, in Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, Harold C. Gardiner ed., (New York: Doubleday, 1995), xxvi – xxvii.

²⁹ à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, John Payne trans., Howard Malcolm ed., p. 100.

practices: ‘we are soon dejected, and have immediate recourse to human consolations’. A more appropriate response to adversity, claimed à Kempis, was to perceive such experiences as divinely orchestrated opportunities for the monk to receive a blessing. ‘Did we but endeavor, like valiant soulders’, wrote à Kempis, ‘to stand our ground in the hour of battle, we should feel the succor of the Lord descending upon us from Heaven: for He is always ready to assist those that resolutely strive, and place their whole confidence in the power of His grace, nay, He creates occasions of contest to bless us with opportunities of victory’. In order to experience such a blessing of victory over despair from outward difficulties, à Kempis advised that he and his fellow monks needed to rid themselves of the desires of their earthly self. ‘If the progress to perfection is placed only in external observances, our religion, having no divine life, will quickly perish with the things on which subsists; the ax must be laid to the root of the tree, that being separated and freed from the restless desires of nature and self, we may possess our souls in the peace of God’.³⁰

Ridding the self of earthly desires, and pursuing ‘the path of holiness’ through mortification would not be easy, according to à Kempis; indeed, he wrote that ‘some violence must be used at first setting out to remove its numerous obstructions’, especially in resisting and denying the desires of ‘our own will’. To proceed along the difficult path of mortification, à Kempis advised meditating on the afterlife: if the pious would but ‘consider what peace thou wilt bring to thyself and what joy thou wilt produce in Heaven, by a life conformed to the life of Christ, I think thou wouldst be more watchful and zealous for thy continued advancement toward spiritual perfection’. The violence done to rid one’s self of earthly desires by the practice of mortification was not completely dependent upon the efforts of the individual monk.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 100 – 101.

Such violence could occur, according to à Kempis, when the monk experienced ‘adversity or (was) disturbed and tempted by evil thoughts’. These experiences afforded the monk an opportunity to feel ‘the necessity of the power and presence of God in his soul, without which he certainly knows that he can neither bear evil nor do good’. Driven to rely on the ‘presence of God in his soul’, the monk then ‘grieves and prays, and “groans to be delivered from the bondage of corruption”; then weary of living in vanity, he wished to “die, that he may be dissolved, and be with Christ”; and then he is fully convinced that absolute security and perfect rest are not compatible with his present state of life’.³¹

While differing in its articulation from one author to the next, in many respects John Calvin and those Puritan preachers that followed him in sixteenth and seventeenth century England aped the medieval Catholic Church’s doctrine of mortification, especially the presentation of that doctrine as found in Thomas à Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ* (c. 1427). Along with the works of St. Augustine and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Puritan ministers were quite familiar with à Kempis’ book.³²

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559) and also in his commentary on Colossians, Calvin, like à Kempis, stressed the importance of adversity in the Christian life, and of enduring that adversity by depending on God to supply an inner strength or courage. Calvin emphasized that the individual was not to wait on adversity in order to benefit from such an experience, but to meditate on the ultimate result of extreme suffering, the death of the body. Also similar to à Kempis’ view, Calvin encouraged his readers to see experiences of suffering which brought despair as opportunities to grow in faith and dependence upon God. He exhorted his followers

³¹ Ibid., pp. 100 – 103.

³² Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p. 28. On à Kempis’ influence on Protestantism, see also Cullman, ‘Life of Thomas à Kempis’, in Thomas à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, John Payne trans., Howard Malcolm ed., p. 81.

to view suffering in the body, and even the reality of eventual death from that suffering, as the loving discipline of God. This is revealed in a passage from Book III in the *Institutes* (1559),

Various diseases ever and anon attack us: at onetime pestilence rages; at another we are involved in all the calamities of war. Frost and hail, destroying the promise of the year, cause sterility, which reduces us to penury; wife, parents, children, relatives, are carried off by death; our house is destroyed by fire. These are the events which make men curse their life, detest the day of their birth, execrate the light of heaven, even censure God, and (as they are eloquent in blasphemy) charge him with cruelty and injustice. The believer must in these things also contemplate the mercy and truly paternal indulgence of God... In short, whatever happens, knowing that it is ordered by the Lord, he will receive it with a placid and grateful mind, and will not contumaciously resist the government of him, at whose disposal he has placed himself and all that he has.³³

Calvin and à Kempis, therefore, both encouraged their readers to bear with difficulties in life, to look beyond those calamities and causes of death, because ‘the hand of God is the ruler and arbiter of the fortunes of all’.³⁴ ‘We are God’s’, writes Calvin, ‘let us, therefore, live and die to him’.³⁵ For, Calvin wrote, God does not rush ‘on with thoughtless violence, [but] dispenses good and evil with perfect regularity’.³⁶ Calvin’s theology of mortification had much to do with an attitude to or perspective on one’s life as a willing sacrifice and to see in affliction the love or grace of God. So long as the faithful dwell on earth, Calvin wrote, he or she ‘must be like sheep for the slaughter, in order that they may be conformed to Christ their head’. In other words, accepting affliction and those experiences of pain or earthly loss were to be viewed as the Christian’s duty out of a belief that these circumstances were caused or sent according to God’s ‘paternal indulgence’.

³³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559 edition, Henry Beveridge trans., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), Book III, x, 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Book III, x, 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.* This was, in fact, a common perspective found in many of Calvin’s writings, especially in his commentaries on the Psalms and the Gospels. See Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959), pp. 258 – 264.

³⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, x, 10.

The most obvious implication of Calvin and à Kempis' view of God as divine 'arbiter' and omnipotent paternal figure was that the Christian life required a certain mindset or focus. Calvin addressed this point directly. In order to accept affliction and difficulties in life, Calvin wrote that the Christian must raise his or her 'mind' to 'heaven'. Thomas à Kempis had mirrored this perspective in his call to proceed along the path of mortification by reflecting on the afterlife, in heaven. For Calvin, reflecting on an afterlife in heaven allowed the Christian not only to perceive afflictions and bodily difficulties as divinely ordained experiences in a spiritual journey toward the afterlife, but also to put to death the sins of the flesh by focusing his or her attention on that existence after the death of the body. Heavenly meditations, according to Calvin, were to sustain the inner passage of the Christian towards the grave, a theory based in a theology of the death and resurrection of Christ.³⁷ 'To conclude in one word', wrote Calvin, 'the cross of Christ then only triumphs in the breasts of believers over the devil and the flesh, sin and sinners, when their eyes are directed to the power of his resurrection.'³⁸

For Calvin and à Kempis, then, a more pious Christian life was manifested in the inner life, or 'breasts', of human beings by experiencing the victory of Christ's death in the heart by focusing on 'the power' of Christ's resurrection in the mind. Thomas à Kempis had said essentially the same thing when he wrote that by experiencing adversity the monk was driven to rely on the 'presence of God in his soul', and thereby 'grieves and prays, and "groans to be delivered from the bondage of corruption"; then weary of living in vanity, he wished to "die, that he may be dissolved, and be with Christ"; and then he is fully convinced that absolute security

³⁷ Ibid., Book II.xvii.2-3.

³⁸ Ibid., Book III.ix.6.

and perfect rest are not compatible with his present state of life'.³⁹ Calvin simply seemed to express this idea by a more clearly identified and systematic dialectic. 'Our salvation', wrote Calvin in Book II of the *Institutes* (1559), 'may be thus divided between the death and resurrection of Christ...' 'By the former, sin was abolished and death annihilated; by the latter, righteousness was restored and life revived the power and efficacy of the former being still bestowed upon us by means of the latter'.⁴⁰ The two poles of this dialectic were revealed by Calvin as developing from a concept of that 'power' by which Christ arose from the dead, and through which life thrives and powers the inner life of human beings through the difficulties and challenges of life in the world. According to Calvin, the successful Christian life was found in the experience generated by looking past human weakness and the inevitability of death and instead to that power which resurrected Christ. 'For seeing that in the cross, death and burial of Christ, nothing but weakness appears, faith must go beyond all these, in order that it may be provided with full strength'. It was 'by (Christ's) resurrection', that believers were said 'to be begotten again to a living hope'.⁴¹ Just as the Apostle Paul had written that Christ was 'declared to be the Son of God by his resurrection (Rom. i.4)', so too had Peter written, 'that God "raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet i.21). This was the work of mortification, according to both à Kempis and Calvin, a mindset whereby (in the words of Calvin) believers were to 'seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God'.⁴²

At the time that Nehemiah Wallington's stepsiblings died (1609), one did not have to read a book or listen to a sermon in order to absorb the doctrine of

³⁹ à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, John Payne trans., Howard Malcolm ed., pp. 100 – 103.

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book II.xvi.13.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., Book III.i.

mortification presented in à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* (c. 1427) and Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559). The call of à Kempis and Calvin to reflect on death and the evanescent quality of life was reflected in Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety* (1613). 'Think often of the shortness of thy life', wrote Bayly. 'O let not then the false hope of an uncertain long life hinder thee from becoming a present Practiser of religious piety!'⁴³ For Bayly, life was the opportunity to repent and live with piety, and, death, the reminder of judgment for failing to engage one's life with piety, two themes that were presented graphically in the frontispiece of the book.⁴⁴ On the left hand side of the title, the image of a skull is situated between two columns. Underneath the skull was a passage taken from the Bible, which reads 'Remember Time'. Opposite the image of the skull, to the right of the title, stood a woman looking up into a bright light that shining down from above her. Underneath the image of the woman were the word 'Watch' and a reference to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 25.⁴⁵ The subject of Matthew 25 was the need to prepare for death or Christ's second coming, whichever came first, and brought one's entrance into Heaven. Jesus described how to prepare for this event in Matthew 25 through parables about ten virgins, a servant and the use of his talents while his master was away, and the difference between sheep and goats. In reference to the parable of the ten virgins, Bayly wrote, 'Hasten thy coming, O blessed Savior, and end these sinful days, and give me grace, that like a wise Virgin I may be prepared with oil in my lamp, to meet thee the sweet Bridegroom of my soul at thy coming, whether it be thy day of death or of judgment'.⁴⁶ A similar image to that found in Bayly's text was found in Christopher Sutton's *Disce Mori: Learne to Die* (1601). In the image found in

⁴³ Bayly, *The Practice of piety*, p. 129.

⁴⁴ On Protestants and the influence of frontispieces, see Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550 – 1640*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 135 – 140.

⁴⁵ Bayly, *The Practice of piety*, p. 277.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 334 – 335.

Sutton's text, though, Christ stands at the center of the bright light shining down from the above, and, rather than a woman staring up at the light, are numerous people, some of whom are sinking into the ground. An angel, blowing a trumpet, emerges from the clouds that encircle the light that surrounds Christ. A banner flows from the angel's trumpet and meanders through the crowd of people. On that banner, the following words are visible: 'As death leaveth thee, so shall judgment find thee'.⁴⁷ The same bright light surrounding Christ in the heavens was also portrayed in the frontispiece to John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1610). In the frontispiece to Foxe's text, the luminous Christ is figured as presiding over the execution of martyrs and the affairs of the church.⁴⁸ Such images were not unique or limited to religious texts. For example, in Sir Walter Raleigh's, *The History of the World* (1614), a skeleton and a young man sit back to back – one named death and the other named oblivion. Rising up from these two images holding the world up under the eye of Providence is 'The Mistress of Man's life, grave History, Raising the World to good, or Evil fame...'⁴⁹ While both of these examples used the image of death to portray the inevitability of man's death and the potential to live with purpose in the while alive, they appear to have imparted different philosophies. The purpose of the images in Raleigh's *The History of the World* (1614) presented a narrative of those who had secured fame and are remembered in history, while Bayly's, Sutton's, and Foxe's directed the individual away from the world toward the judgment of Christ in heaven.

In the frontispiece to books like Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety* (1613), in particular, Nehemiah would have encountered the difficult concept of living out of

⁴⁷ Christopher Sutton, *Disce Mori: Learn to Die*, (London, 1601), A6. That Nehemiah was in fact drawn to these images is evidenced by the fact that he purchased Sutton's book in 1621. See pp. 203 – 206 of this thesis.

⁴⁸ John Foxe, *Actes and monuments most special and memorable, happening in the Church*, (London, 1610).

⁴⁹ Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World*, (London, 1614).

a desire to die but also to cherish life, which was presented in the doctrine of mortification in à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* (c. 1427) and Calvin's presentation of that doctrine by way of dialectic in the *Institutes* (1559).⁵⁰ In expanding on his own interpretation of the doctrine of mortification, Calvin wrote that on one side of that dialectic was the pietistic disposition whereby the Christian should 'long for death', which was mirrored in *The Imitation of Christ* (c. 1427) when à Kempis wrote that the monk, weary of living in vanity, would find himself longing 'to "die, that he may be dissolved, and be with Christ"'. For à Kempis, longing for death went hand in hand with a desire to be delivered from corruption. Similarly, Calvin wrote, 'Still let us ardently long for death and constantly meditate upon it, and in comparison with future immortality, let us despise life, and, on account of the bondage of sin, long to renounce it whenever it shall so please the Lord.'⁵¹ The individual, though, was not to fixate or renounce his or her earthly existence. On the other side of Calvin's dialectic, a different disposition was presented whereby the believer should view life as a blessing. 'This life, though abounding in all kinds of wretchedness', wrote Calvin, 'is justly classed among divine blessings, which are not to be despised. Wherefore, if we do not recognize the kindness of God in it, we are chargeable with no little ingratitude towards him. To believers, especially, it ought to be a proof of divine benevolence, since it is wholly destined to promote their salvation.'⁵² Thomas à Kempis had made a similar assessment in his view of the blessedness of those saints who had achieved a proper view of life in the world and were able to view adversity as a benefit to the spiritual life. These opposing ideas, between despising life and cherishing life, were

⁵⁰ This dialectic was also suggested by Calvin in his Commentary on Colossians 3:5: 'Let us note that mortification is twofold or double. The first respecteth those things that are about us, of which he hath entreated hitherto (vv. 1 – 4), the other is inward: namely of the disposition and will, and of our whole nature corrupted and infected'. See John Calvin, *A Commentarie of M. John Calvin, upon the Epistle to the Colossians*, (London, 1581), p. 64.

⁵¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III.ix.

⁵² Ibid.

depicted in the frontispieces to books like Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety* (1613) book as a kind of puzzle for the viewer, but literally put forth by Calvin and à Kempis when they asked their readers to imagine the meaning of two opposing human experiences – health, vitality and human potential versus death, weakness and meaninglessness.⁵³

Nehemiah would have also encountered a view of mortification which resembled the theology of that doctrine as put forth by Thomas à Kempis and John Calvin in cheap printed materials and were especially available during and as a result of plague outbreaks.⁵⁴ For example, in 1603, 'A Prayer very Comfortable and necessary to be used of all Christians every Morning and Evening, amongst their Families, that it would please the Lord God... to withdraw his heavy hand and grievous visitation from among us' was printed and sold to passersby 'entering into the Exchange'. This prayer, printed on one page, started by having the reader voice to 'Almighty, Omnipotent, and eternal God, most just, and yet most merciful Father in Christ Jesus' that they deserved the sending of affliction because of their utter sinfulness and corruption: 'We most wretched and miserable sinners, acknowledge, that in regard of our manifold sins, it is no marvel that we be afflicted with sundry kinds of miseries, griefs, and extraordinary frustrations'. According to the document, the number of an individual's 'particular sins' was beyond reckoning up: 'they are more in number then the hairs of our heads, they are far more than we can possibly feel or know'. It was out of the confession of this miserable condition that the

⁵³ This perspective has obvious similarities with the medieval *danse macabre*. See pp. 37 - 39 of this thesis.

⁵⁴ The plague seems to have produced or at least coincided with a boom in literature in the early seventeenth century. One famous pamphleteer that took advantage of this literary expansion was Thomas Dekker. On Dekker and the increase in demand for pamphlets and other printed materials, see Ian Munro, 'The City and Its Double: Plague Time in Early Modern London', *English Literary Renaissance*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 13 Nov. 2000, pp. 251 – 254. On Nehemiah's interest in this literature, see pp. 79 - 80 of this thesis.

individual was then prompted to acknowledge, ‘that our sins have grievously provoked thee (Lord), not only to take vengeance of our bodies and goods, but even also to separate both our bodies and souls from thee to everlasting destruction of both’. It was pitiable, according to the document, that the Lord would find it necessary to judge the people of England so harshly, for God had indeed been merciful to England’s citizens in the past. ‘Instead of war’, wrote the author of the document, the Lord had acted toward the citizens with ‘exceeding great mercy’ by sending them ‘peace’: ‘instead of scarcity, plenty: instead of Popery, thy Gospel still established amongst us, to our everlasting comfort: and instead of all evils, which we have justly deserved, thou sendest all blessings which we have not deserved’. These mercies should have ‘moved’ the citizens of England to a ‘measure of thankfulness and obedience, than we have any way performed unto thee’. The citizens of England, however, had sought ‘filthiness: from fasting, to feasting: from blessing, to cursing: and from all religious exercises, to all irreligious practices’. Because the people of England had turned away from God’s goodness in the past, the document then directed the reader, in similar fashion to à Kempis and Calvin’s writings on mortification outlined above, to ‘beseech thee (O Lord) that yet at last we may fall down under thy hand, and profit by thy chastisement: that we may tremble before thee when thou doest roar, and submit ourselves, when thou sendest out thine armies against us’. The document further recommended that the proper attitude in times of affliction was one that led the individual to cry out to the Lord ‘to teach us that we may (deny)⁵⁵ the world, and considering that all is but vanity, our desires may be drawn up to that life and happiness which is forever’. It was only by the power and instruction of the Lord that, according to the document, the individual might be

⁵⁵ This word is difficult to read in the original text. However, the context of the word in the sentence suggests something like ‘deny’.

cleared ‘from the contagion of sin’, so that he or she might also ‘be cleared from the infection of pestilence’. In light of this belief, the reader was encouraged to ‘fear (God’s) judgments, and love thy commandments, detest sin, and fight against the corruption of our hearts’. Moreover, if the reader would ‘advance in righteousness, and prefer obedience before our lives, then shalt thou purify both our souls and bodies, and prepare us to that everlasting kingdom and glory, which thou hast purchased for us, but the blood of Jesus Christ, thine only begotten Son, our Lord and Savior’.⁵⁶

Despite the ease with which Nehemiah would have encountered Thomas à Kempis’ and Calvin’s theology of mortification through frontispieces and cheap printed materials, his extant manuscripts evidence his absorption of these ideas by increments, through changes and fluctuations in his understanding and application of that doctrine over time. He never appears to have been settled in his comprehension of the doctrine. In response to his stepsiblings’ death, Nehemiah did not look toward heaven; the reform he pursued did not involve focusing on the death and resurrection of Christ, as à Kempis and Calvin recommended. Nor did Nehemiah (from 1609 to 1618) emphasize an inner power generated by thoughts of God’s paternal love or by meditating on Christ’s death and resurrection. Most of all, Nehemiah did not interpret the reformation of his life as something that could come by God’s causing him to suffer from pain and affliction in his body. If anything, Nehemiah’s narrative of his efforts to have ‘a care over his ways and do better’ attested to his efforts at avoiding adversity through his performance of ‘holy duties’ and obedience to God’s

⁵⁶ *A Prayer very Comfortable and necessary to be used of all Christians every Morning and Evening, amongst their Families, that it would please the Lord God to be appeased in his wrath, and to withdraw his heavy hand and grievous visitation from among us’ was printed and sold to passersby ‘entering into the Exchange, (London, 1603).*

commands.⁵⁷ The clearest indication that he comprehended and pursued mortification in a manner that resembled à Kempis' and Calvin's theology of mortification may be found in examples from his extant after his temptations to run away and commit suicide came to an end, in 1623. But, even after his temptations came to an end, and for the rest of his life, his manuscripts disclose less of a static interpretation and application of this doctrine as much as his tendency to adjust and shift his approach according to his circumstances.

The first indication that Nehemiah started to understand or at least to practice a view of mortification similar to that presented in the theology of Thomas à Kempis and Calvin is not evident in his manuscripts until the year 1624. On 'the 7th day of April 1624', he wrote in his earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance', that he was 'meditating and considering with' himself 'what corruptions' he had. These thoughts moved him to pray not only for the 'strength to overcome' his sin, but also for God 'to lay' upon him 'what pain or punishment he would upon' his body. According to his manuscript, it was through bodily pain that he believed God would deliver 'mercy upon my poor soul'.⁵⁸ He testified that this prayer had arisen out of a concern for 'many things amiss' in his family, and later in the passage named the 'two sins' that troubled him as 'lust' and 'little or no delight in the service of God'. One week after Nehemiah offered his prayer for bodily punishment to combat these sins, he wrote in his manuscript that he had finally 'found a great abatement of his sin of lust'. His prayer had been answered. He expressed gratitude to God out of his belief that in the 'fifteen years'

⁵⁷ See p. 97 of this thesis.

⁵⁸ GL MS 204, fol. 402. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 55.

that he suffered from the sin of lust, he had never been so ‘chaste’ as when his ‘loving Father did afflict me in my body’.⁵⁹

The particular event, in 1624, which revealed that Nehemiah had started to view mortification in a similar fashion as that offered in the theology of Thomas à Kempis and Calvin was the onset of a ‘toothache’. According to his manuscript, the pain of this toothache was so great that he could find ‘little rest night and day’. He even spent ‘eight shillings in things to help him’ deal with the pain ‘but could find little ease’. The affliction lasted for sometime. He did find a ‘week or two’ of rest from the pain, but on ‘the eleventh of May, which was Tuesday in the afternoon’, he wrote that it ‘pleased my loving Father to afflict me again’. This time he lamented that the ‘great pain’ in his tooth ‘did increase more and more’. A week later, ‘on the Sabbath’, the doctor informed him that he was ‘dangerously sick of a burning fever’. He remained ‘very sick for three weeks’. He was apparently so ill that he and ‘some of his friends’ thought he ‘should have died’. Finally, he suffered with ‘an ague’ every morning for one week, which ‘terrified him greatly, but wrote that his ‘merciful God did ease me, and raise me up again to some health’. Once again, though, according to his manuscript, ‘it pleased’ his ‘loving Father to afflict’ him with excruciating pain of ‘the toothache’. The prolongation of the illness caused him to ponder, ‘how long the Lord’ would ‘continue this his Fatherly correction’. Therefore, he ‘humbly entreated’ God to give him ‘much strength and patience to bear it.’ Nehemiah asked the Lord ‘to make a holy and sanctified use of it’ and the ability to ‘submit’ his ‘will to his (God’s) holy will in this and all other of his chastisements which it shall please his Majesty to lay upon me.’⁶⁰ Despite more than a month of pain, eight shillings in pain-relievers, and the belief that he ‘should have died’,

⁵⁹ GL MS 204, fol. 402. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 56.

⁶⁰ GL MS 204, fol. 402 – 403. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 55 – 56.

Nehemiah believed his experience of a toothache, which probably had turned into an abscess and was indeed deadly, provided him with the discipline or training to ‘overcome’ the sin of lust. He interpreted the experience, in the language of Christian mortification, as part of his many ‘troubles and afflictions here in this world’, which served as a divine and even positive purpose for the training of ‘God’s children’ to live according to God’s ‘holy will’.⁶¹

Nehemiah’s move toward a view of mortification similar to that found in à Kempis and Calvin was not only manifest by his expression of belief in the benefits of affliction, but also in his expression of appreciation for good health. This perspective resembled à Kempis’ and Calvin’s assertion that the individual should not only despise life, but also appreciate life as a gift from God, and is evidenced by a passage that Nehemiah recorded into his earliest extant manuscript three years after he and his family had nearly died in a fire, in 1631. In this passage, Nehemiah conveyed the idea that the possibility of death from illnesses or tragic accidents no longer supplied him with merely a positive lesson in his pursuit of piety. Instead of praying for and expressing gratitude for troubles that might lead to death, he wrote about the ‘blessing’ of physical vitality. It was not an easy perspective for Nehemiah to maintain, but he seemed to find an appreciation for good health by reflecting on other problems he was having at the time. He recorded the passage during a period when he was struggling financially. He described in the entry that ‘in this hard straight, in want of worldly things, my desire and strife is not to be so much cast down as to forget the thousand mercies of God other ways bestowed upon me’. In his opinion, while times were tough, ‘the Lord hath not dealt niggardly, nor sparingly’ with him. He reasoned with himself that God ‘hath hedged’ him ‘in with many mercies’. He asked,

⁶¹ GL MS 204, fol. 403. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 56.

rhetorically, indeed, ‘what is it that (God) denies me?’ He then compared his life with the life of others, and pointed specifically to his own good health and that of his family. He stated that more than money he believed one of the greatest blessings in life was good health. This reasoning led him to reflect on his experience of illness. He asked, again rhetorically, ‘was there not a time when I would have parted from any means for ease of my headache, nay, for the toothache’. ‘Is there not many that is very rich and hath abundance, yet ask them what they would have?’ Nehemiah answered, ‘They would say, oh, health, oh, health’. In Nehemiah’s estimation, if ‘one wants health he can take no comfort in wife, children, parents, brothers, sisters, nor friends, nor gold or silver or pleasure or meats; for his soul abhors the conceit of the daintiest dish’. Poor health could even affect the benefits of piety. According to the testimony in his manuscript, a man of poor health was ‘unfit’ for the ‘spiritual comfort’: ‘reading disturbs him, praying and meditating he cannot [because] his pain so troubles him’. These, and ‘many other ways’, Nehemiah wrote, ‘hindered’ a person from ‘comfort of the soul and body which would be too tedious’ for him ‘to reckon up’.⁶²

The expression of appreciation for good health did not mean that Nehemiah began to waver in his belief about the benefits of affliction in the Christian life. His adherence to a belief in the benefits of affliction seemed to be propped up by what he heard in sermons or read in the Bible. For example, on 25 May 1642, a Fast day, Nehemiah wrote in his sixth extant manuscript, ‘The Growth of a Christian’, that he went to hear Simeon Ashe preach instead of his own minister, Henry Roborough. The text from Ashe’s sermon was Amos 3:6: ‘Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it’. According to Nehemiah’s recollection of the sermon in his

⁶² GL MS 204, fols. 339 – 440. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 73 – 74.

manuscript, Ashe 'showed that all affliction is evil and that the author of this evil is the Lord; for it is impossible that there should be any affliction in a land and the Lord not know it'. Seemingly in response to this thesis (or from the notes he had taken while listening to the sermon), Nehemiah then wrote, 'Then let men and devils do what they can; they cannot do one stroke more to the people of God, than what God will suffer'. This idea provoked the thought that neither he nor any child of God should fear pain or illness. He wrote in his manuscript, 'did but the people of God consider of this they need not be afraid'. This seemed to mean that God, in a sense, dispensed what measure of pain or suffering an individual could bear, and reminded either Ashe or Nehemiah of 1 Corinthians 10:13, which Nehemiah copied into his manuscript: 'God doth so proportion out affliction in his wisdom for his people that he will lay no more on them than they can bear'.⁶³ The subject of verse 13 in the context of 1 Corinthians 10 had to do with the willingness to undergo affliction and to remain vigilant against temptation in order to avoid God's judgment in death. In 1 Corinthians 10:1 -11, the Apostle Paul drew upon examples from the history of the Israel. He specifically pointed to those Israelites that escaped from Egypt through the parting of the Red Sea, all of whom experienced the same provisions and guidance from God. Yet, some of those Israelites turned their backs on God, grumbling and committing sins that God had forbid. Because of this turning away, many the Israelites died, which Paul attributed to God's divine judgment. It was this example that then led to Paul's statements in verse 13 where he encouraged his readers not to repeat the same errors. The Corinthians, in other words, were susceptible to the same temptations as the Israelites who had fled Egypt. Instead of grumbling or turning their backs on God, Paul encouraged them to understand that God knew the enticement of

⁶³ The reference could have come from Nehemiah. 1 Corinthians 10 seems to have supplied Nehemiah with an important proof-text for recording what he interpreted as examples of divine judgment in his second extant manuscript. See pp. 213 - 217 of this thesis for more on this topic.

temptation for them, the motivation to grumble and feel dissatisfied, and would not let them experience ‘more temptation than they can bear’. By referring to 1 Corinthians 10:13, therefore, and the broader context of 1 Corinthians 10, the message that Nehemiah gathered from Ashe’s sermon was to remain faithful to God in times of affliction - God understands how suffering in the body can provoke a turning away and a relinquishing of trust in divine guidance and provision. This point, however, only reinforced a more central theme in Ashe’s address: affliction not only brought about temptation, but was caused by God for the good of the individual. According to Nehemiah’s manuscript God’s purpose in causing affliction in the life of the individual was comparable to ‘the husbandman (who) layeth the plow harder to one side than the other’. Just as the farmer plows one side with more vigor, ‘so it is with God, he lays on a littler here and there; if it be too heavy then he takes it off and so orders it in his wisdom for their good’. Simply put: God sent affliction to reap a harvest that was beneficial to the individual. Nehemiah then recorded in his manuscript that the knowledge of this purpose in suffering should cause one to look further than ‘secondary means as thus when we are sick and say it was such air that made me sick... Our acquaintance with God will be an excellent thing to uphold us in timorous times when we can say it is my God and he knoweth my estate and what is good for me’.⁶⁴

Toward the end of his life, Nehemiah appeared to hold both an appreciation for good health, and a belief that affliction was a tool of God’s discipline. In the year before he started writing his last extant manuscript, in 1654, he testified to writing ‘a Book called a Day book of my sins and Experienced Mercies’. He seems to have found this practice a great help in his pursuit of piety, and when he came to the end of

⁶⁴ BL MS 40883, fol. 33. A portion of this passage also appears in Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 166.

this book decided not to give the practice over. He started another manuscript based upon the same premise, which he entitled ‘my second part of my daybook of my sins and Experienced Mercies: or Experienced Mercies of Faith and Return of Prayers’. In addition to keeping a record of the results of his daily examination in these manuscripts, Nehemiah wrote that he also took notice ‘of what profit and good I gain by every affliction and correction my God layeth upon me and others’. He based this decision, according to his testimony, on the meaning of the phrase ‘rod of God, which he found in Micah 6:9 and copied into his manuscript: ‘The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city and the man of wisdom shall see thy name. Hear the rod and who hath appointed it’. In addition to suffering in various areas of his life, like poor finances, Nehemiah wrote that he heard God’s rod in illness: ‘So for sickness, that Rod hath a voice saying did I spend health in God service, did I prize it, was I thankful for it, did I pity and pray for others’. Because he had not treasured the health of his body, he believed ‘God may justly deprive me of it’. He even expressed a belief, based on his reading of 1 Samuel 2:27-34, that the ‘rod of God’ was heard in the ‘death of thy dear ones’ because he loved them too much. He wrote in his manuscripts, ‘this Rod hath a voice saying, did not thy affections and love run out too much on thy wife or children even more than upon God; therefore hath God taken them away’.⁶⁵ By this time in his life, Nehemiah had lost all but one of his children, and his wife, Grace, and their only surviving daughter, Sarah, were constantly beleaguered by ‘sickness and weakness’.⁶⁶

The difference between Nehemiah’s later expressions of a theology of mortification (presented above), and the theology of mortification that he communicated in the narrative of his earlier efforts to reform, centered on a view of the discipline of his body that was dependent upon him rather than affliction caused

⁶⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 194 – 195. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 296 – 297.

⁶⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 474 and 482.

by God. It was only in his later reflection on the death of stepsiblings when writing his last extant manuscript that he interpreted his earlier view as a failure to understand that the power to conform his life to a godlier pattern had to come from a source outside of his self. This is what he meant by the reference to Jeremiah 10:23, when he wrote that the ‘ways of man is not in himself’.

The reason for the difference between Nehemiah’s later and earlier view of mortification was possibly attributable to several factors, but (as this chapter and the previous chapter have evidenced) the major influence in his life after his stepsiblings’ death was books, other printed materials, and sermons. These sources most certainly offered him a Calvinist theology of mortification. For instance, there is no reason to doubt that the books his father and older brother gave, which included the Bible and John Brinsley’s *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615), were Calvinist.⁶⁷ Evidence from his extant manuscripts suggests that his father and older brother, John, were as much Puritan in their theological persuasion as he was.⁶⁸ The difference, therefore, between his later and earlier view of mortification was perhaps due to how he interpreted those sources at a particular time. Perhaps the books his father and older brother gave him were too complex for the young Nehemiah, who was only eleven years old when his stepsiblings died, and seventeen when he received the Bible and Brinsley’s *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615), ‘along with many other good books’ in 1615.⁶⁹ Nehemiah did confess with struggling to understand what he read at this time. After he purchased his own copy of ‘the great Bible with the notes’, in

⁶⁷ On Brinsley as a Calvinist, see Richard Cust, ‘Brinsley, John (1600–1665)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁸ On the books Nehemiah received from his father and older brother, see pp. 68 – 69 of this thesis.

⁶⁹ On the access of difficult theological books for members of the laity, see Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, pp. 109 – 124. Green argues that lay demand for these books prompted publishers to print briefer and less complex materials for the less educated. The attempt of publishers, however, to ask university trained theologians to scale back their dense scholarly style proved hollow. Lengthy and intricate studies continued to find their way into the marketplace for the laity to purchase.

1618, and reported having read a little every night after his family had gone to bed, he confessed ‘little did I understand and less did I practice’.⁷⁰ However, it is certainly not necessary to perceive a deficiency in Nehemiah’s ability to read and interpret texts correctly. Perhaps there were other factors that contributed to the way he read a particular book. Perhaps there were different parts, subsequent editions, or addendums to a text to which he did not have access. For example, consider the following passage from the one book that Nehemiah mentioned in those years that immediately followed his stepsiblings’ death in 1609, John Brinsley’s *The true watch, and rule of life*.

Try whether we can find any sound comfort in our prayers, that God will hear us in the day of our affliction or any time of need, or that anyone of the promises of God belong to us, or so much as believe any article of faith with comfort, until we have soundly repented of all our sins, our known sins particularly, unknown generally, with a full resolution to know the Lord, and fear him, walking in all his commandments forever.⁷¹

Brinsley may have read Calvin, and may have been affected by Calvin’s theology of mortification, but in this passage he did not exhort his reader to focus on Christ or meditate on death, as Calvin had recommended. Instead, Brinsley encouraged his reader to exhibit greater obedience to God’s commands in the fight against sin. Moreover, in this passage, Brinsley did not see in the affliction of the body a tool of God’s discipline and evidence of God’s paternal love, but merely a reason to seek comfort. This is not to say that Brinsley’s view of mortification differed from Calvin. Indeed, Brinsley seemed to resemble the teachings of Calvin, but in other passages. Like Calvin, Brinsley indicated to his readers that in order to cope with affliction and the awareness that death was inevitable, the believer needed the Lord ‘to increase our faith, in all thy gracious promises’. An increase of faith, according to Brinsley, would

⁷⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 56. Booy, Notebooks of... Wallington, p. 267. See also p. 65 of this thesis.

⁷¹ John Brinsley, *The true watch or A direction for the examination of our spiritual estate (according to the word of God, whereby we must be judged at the last day) to help to preserve us from apostasy, or decaying in grace, and to further our daily growth in Christ*, (London, 1606), pp. 110 – 111.

not only provide comfort, but also the ‘power of godliness’ through which ‘we may easily overcome all hindrances of the world, and having the patience of Saints, we may be faithful to the death’.⁷² This latter, more Calvinist perspective, however, was found in the second part of Brinsley’s book entitled *The second part of the true watch containing the perfect rule and sum of prayer* (1607), while the former was found in the first part, *The true watch or A direction for the examination of our spiritual estate* (1606). It is impossible to know if reading or emphasizing one of these parts over the other from Brinsley influenced Nehemiah. The fact that he possibly owned a corrected and enlarged edition of parts one and two published together in 1615 (the year he recorded in his manuscript that his brother gave him the book) suggests that he could have read both passages equally.⁷³ But, it is also possible that he only owned a copy of part one (1606) or only read part one or a version of part one in the 1615 edition, and it was this reading which led him to reform his life in the manner that he did from 1609 to 1618: by attempting to be more obedient in his fight against the sinful tendencies produced by his body.

Brinsley’s *True watch, and rule of life* (1615) was certainly not the only possible source that offered Nehemiah inspiration for his efforts to conform his life to a godly pattern after his stepsiblings’ death. Nehemiah’s early view of mortification could have come from his reading of commentaries on the Bible: commentaries were highly academic and extremely technical and possibly well beyond the young intellectual capability of the eleven-year- old Nehemiah. Nevertheless, considering the fact that his father and older brother were encouraging him to read the Bible and Brinsley’s *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615), it is not inconceivable to think that

⁷² John Brinsley, *The second part of the true watch containing the perfect rule and sum of prayer*, (London, 1607), p. 61.

⁷³ Booy has noted the possibility that Nehemiah’s brother gave him the 1615 edition of John Brinsley’s *The true watch* in Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267 n. 21.

Nehemiah was also dabbling in such books, especially as help to his Scripture reading. The use of technical books like commentaries was not necessarily unusual, especially considering that the Bible itself was a difficult book to understand. In the early seventeenth century, printers were keen to meet a demand for commentaries among lesser clergy and other readers who were not proficient with ancient languages but nevertheless interested in studying the Scripture.⁷⁴ Commentaries and supportive materials were probably available to Nehemiah based the apparent economic means and willingness of his father to buy books. It is also possible that Nehemiah had access to his father's library. Perhaps the reason that his father gave Nehemiah books was based upon his own pursuit of piety through reading.⁷⁵

One commentary that was available to Nehemiah in the years after his stepsiblings' death and stressed the need to exert more control and obedience from his body, was William Perkins' *A cloud of faithful witnesses, leading to the heavenly Canaan, or, A commentary upon the 11 chapter to the Hebrews preached in Cambridge to the godly* (1607). Later in his life, Nehemiah testified in his last extant manuscript to reading Perkins' 'Dialogue and state of a Christian'.⁷⁶ The early publication of Perkin's works, however, suggests that Nehemiah could have read him early on in life.⁷⁷ A particular reading of Perkins' commentary on Hebrews 11 could have inspired Nehemiah to reform his life by seeking to mortify or putting to death the 'old man' that was in his body in order for the 'new man' in Christ to become manifest. Perkins' commentary bore the marks of a close interpretation of the Bible

⁷⁴ On commentaries, both as complex reading material and a source for the laity, see Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, pp. 114 - 117.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 109 – 111. In addition to commentaries, given his practice of finding and recording 'places' of Scripture into his manuscripts, Nehemiah could have also used concordances in his study of the Bible. On the use of concordances, see also Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, pp. 124 – 129.

⁷⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 94.

⁷⁷ Perkins works are being printed in the 1580s. See William Perkins, *Four great lyers, striving who shall win the silver whetstone*, (London, 1585).

by merely suggesting that an individual must show signs of progress in the manifestation of the 'new man'. This was part of the traditional view of mortification coming out of the middle ages - the life of the believer was the growing manifestation of the 'new man' in order gain eternal life in heaven.⁷⁸ Perkins wrote 'that we must by baptism die with Christ and be buried with him, else we cannot be saved by him: our corruptions, our sins, which are the old man, must die and be buried with him, else we cannot be saved by him'. The 'new man', explained Perkins, 'is the grace and holiness of Christ', which 'may live in us, and our souls by it'. Mortification was the way of death for the 'old man' for those who have been baptized. For 'he that thus dieth not', wrote Perkins, 'never lives'. A certain reading of Perkins' *A cloud of faithful witnesses* (1607), at this point, however, might focus on the fact that without a life dedicated and marked by the progress of mortification, the individual could not experience the life of Christ, or the manifestation of the 'new man'. Perkins asserted that whoever did not seek to put to death the 'old man' or sinful nature, 'let him never look to be quickened to grace or glory'. If anyone would have Christ save them and prepare for them a place in his heavenly Kingdom, then, according to Perkins, those persons must strive with all diligence to seek to mortify this 'body of our sin'.⁷⁹

If any of Perkins' books reflected Nehemiah's attempts to control the sinful tendencies of his body after his stepsiblings' death, it was his commentary on Galatians entitled *A commentary or exposition, upon the five first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (1604).⁸⁰ In this commentary, Nehemiah would have found the language of mortification and a basis for pursuing the reformation of his life

⁷⁸ See Oury, 'mortification', in Richard Barrie Dobson, *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, p. 987.

⁷⁹ William Perkins, *A cloud of faithful witnesses, leading to the heavenly Canaan, or, A commentary upon the 11 chapter to the Hebrews preached in Cambridge to the godly*, (London, 1607), p. 140.

⁸⁰ Perkins, *A commentary or exposition, upon the five first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*, (London, 1604).

according to his own strength. In focusing on the necessity of wrenching obedience from the body in the Christian life, Perkins drew his reader's attention to matters such as the 'heart' and the need to meditate on the death of Christ, but also wrote that to be 'light in the Lord' the people of God must practice 'mortification' in order to walk as 'children of light'.⁸¹ To not live as 'children of God', by which Perkins meant in disobedience to God's commands, is to 'bring all the judgments of God upon us'. Perkins encouraged his readers to repent and to begin 'walking worthy of the Gospel of Christ', which consisted of the performance of 'holy duties'. (While Nehemiah did not claim to have read Perkins' commentary on Galatians, in the seven years after his stepsiblings' death he described his efforts at reform as 'being somewhat conformable unto holy duties (though little or nor love unto them)'.⁸² In order to perform these 'holy duties', Perkins listed 'two rules'. The first of these rules was that an individual 'must have and carry' a 'right heart'. According to Perkins, 'a right heart is an humble and honest heart'; 'the humble heart, is when in the estimation of our own hearts, we abase ourselves under all creatures upon the earth, and that for our offences: when again, in the affection of our hearts, we exalt the death, and blood of Christ, above all riches, above all honors, above all pleasures, above all joys, and above all that heart can think, or tongue can speak'. The 'humble and honest heart', Perkins continued, was exhibited when the individual carried and cherished 'the settled purpose of not sinning: so as if we sin at any time, we may in the testimony of a good conscience say, that we sinned against our purpose'. In addition to 'right' and 'humble' heart, the 'second rule' that an individual must follow in order to perform holy duties, according to Perkins, was 'to endeavor to obey God, according to all his commandments, and also, according to all the powers of the inward man, that is, not only in action, but also

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 111.

⁸² FS MS V.a.436, fol. 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267. On Nehemiah's practice of 'holy duties', see also pp. 97 – 98 of this thesis.

in will, affection, and thought'.⁸³ Again, while Nehemiah did not mention reading Perkins' commentary on Galatians in the years that immediately followed his stepsiblings' death, much of what Perkins' wrote in regards to 'holy duties' and exhibiting Christian character in obedience to God's commands resembled what Nehemiah described concerning his efforts to reform his life.⁸⁴

Another commentary available to Nehemiah on the topic of mortification was Nicholas Byfield's *The exposition upon the Epistle to the Colossians* (1615).⁸⁵ Byfield's view of the social or interpersonal affects of sin, and the benefit that mortification offered in this area, reflected similar concerns as evident Nehemiah's own perspective after his stepsiblings' death. Nehemiah had interpreted God's judgment in sending the illness that killed his stepsiblings as a consequence for his sins.⁸⁶ Byfield wrote that mortification was the process by which an individual confronted his or her personal vices that were caused by 'our corrupted nature' and the root of all kinds of loathsome deeds 'before God and men'. This was a problem that both Nehemiah and Byfield understood as rooted in the instincts. Nehemiah found in his pursuit of reform in those early years that while he exhibited a 'civil life' outwardly, he also felt a lack of 'love unto' those 'holy duties' inwardly. According to Byfield, the appearance of godliness mattered very little – it was the inner motivation to pursue godliness that signaled the true resolve necessary for mortification. Byfield wrote that the sins of the flesh, which mortification confronts, 'arise not from any noble or divine instinct but are the effects of base flesh in us'. Appearances, in

⁸³ Perkins, *A commentary or exposition, upon... the Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 111.

⁸⁴ In his brief narrative of his efforts at reform, Nehemiah not only wrote of his inner love of 'holy duties', but also his disappointment with his continual struggle not better control his tendency to break out in quarrelsomeness, peevishness and disobedience with other sins breaking forth' from him. See FS MS V.a.436, fols. 4-5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267. See also p. 106 of this thesis.

⁸⁵ On Byfield's Calvinism, see Bryan W. Ball, 'Byfield, Nicholas (1578/9–1622)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸⁶ On Nehemiah's interpretation of his stepsiblings' death as God's judgment for his sins, see p. 107 of this thesis. See also FS MS V.a.436, fols. 3 -4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 266 – 267.

Byfield's estimation, whether 'mean clothes, or a deformed body, or a poor house, or homely fare, or any such things' is not what brought about 'true contempt' and 'defilement'.⁸⁷ The difference between holy and unholy men was that 'the hearts of holy men that have considered the fearful terrors of God denounced in scripture against the vices of men, have even broke within them, and their bones have shaken, for the presence of the Lord, and for his holy word'.⁸⁸

Byfield's way of interpreting each word in Colossians 3:5 would have made it easy for Nehemiah to emphasize certain readings concerning mortification over others. For Byfield, there were various reasons for the Apostle Paul's call for the Christian to mortify the sins of the flesh sin. This was conveyed in a word-for-word examination of Colossians 3:5. Getting down 'to the words particularly', Byfield started this examination suggesting that the word 'Therefore', in v. 5, referred to the information that came before. (The translation of Colossians 3:5 that Byfield was working from read, 'Mortify therefore your members which are on earth, fornication, uncleanness, the inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry'.) If that something referred to by the 'therefore' was the subject of Colossians 3:1, which spoke 'to our rising with Christ', then, according to Byfield, 'it notes that we can never have our part in Christ's resurrection, till we feel the virtue of his death killing sin in us'. (This sounded like the view of mortification reflected in Nehemiah's later beliefs about the 'ways of man' in reformation coming from outside his body.⁸⁹) But, Byfield did not end his discussion of the word 'therefore' with this

⁸⁷ This resembled Calvin's discussion of mortification in Calvin, *A Commentarie of M. John Calvin, upon the Epistle to the Colossians*, (London, 1581), p. 64.

⁸⁸ Nicholas Byfield, *An exposition upon the Epistle to the Colossians, Wherein, not only the text is methodically analyzed, and sense of the words, by the help of writers, both ancient and modern is explained: but also, by doctrine and use, the intent of the holy Ghost is in every place more fully unfolded and urged... Being, the substance of near seven years weekdays sermons*, (London, 1615), p. 30.

⁸⁹ See pp. 97 - 98 of this thesis for Nehemiah's reference to the 'ways of man'.

interpretation. If ‘therefore’ was a reference to the ‘meditation of heavenly things (in 3:2)’, Byfield wrote ‘then it notes that we can never set our affections on things that are above, till we have mortified our members that are on earth’: the ‘corruption of our natures and lives,’ continued Byfield, ‘are the cause of such disability to contemplate of or affect heavenly things’. From this interpretation, Byfield suggested that a heavenly meditation such as that perhaps found in à Kempis’ and Calvin’s view of mortification was impossible due to sin. The individual, in other words, would have to take it upon him or herself in order to clear the way for heavenly meditation by killing the debilitating affects of sin.⁹⁰

It was certainly possible that Nehemiah’s attempts to reform his life by controlling his sinful desires and behaviors came from his reading of Byfield’s explication of the word ‘mortify’. According to Byfield, mortify meant ‘to kill, or to apply that which will make dead’, which, in the context of Colossians 3:5, had to do with killing the presence of sin that continued to live in the body. Byfield acknowledged that this was a strange and mysterious concept. In order to understand how such a word could have a place in the context of Christian grace, he explained that the Lord works ‘in the judgment of flesh and blood by contraries’. For example, ‘men must be poor, if they would have a kingdom, men must sorrow if they would be comforted. Men must serve, if they would be free’. And, in the matter of mortification, Byfield wrote that ‘men must die, if they would live’. While Byfield acknowledges that this way of working in contraries might seem confusing, he explained that ‘God’s thoughts are not as man’s, but his ways are higher than man’s ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth’. All of this, in Byfield’s opinion, should ‘teach us as to live by faith, so not to trust the judgment of the world or the

⁹⁰ Byfield, *An exposition upon the Epistle to the Colossians*, pp. 28 – 29.

flesh in the things of God'.⁹¹ Looking to faith, though, as a way to explain the mystery of mortification, did not diminish Byfield's view that mortification had to do with something more visible and tangible. Byfield argued that the 'manifest doctrine' he found in his study of the word 'mortify' was its association with the doctrine of 'true repentance'. According to Byfield, 'true repentance hath in it the mortification of sin'. By associating the word 'mortify' with repentance, or the turning away from sin, Byfield suggested that what individual should find was a ceasing or decrease in sinful desires and deeds. This was a vigorous but necessary pursuit, in Byfield's estimation. He exhorted his reader to 'not let sin alone till it die itself', to 'kill sin while it might yet live'. It was not enough, wrote Byfield, 'to leave sin when it leaveth us: or to give it over when we can commit it no longer'. For Byfield, one should continue in the pursuit of repentance and mortification until it 'makes a great alteration'. Byfield did not explain what he meant by 'alteration'; all one can do, therefore, is simply accept that some kind of change in life occurs – perhaps this change involved no longer committing those mentioned in Colossians 3:5, 'fornication, uncleanness, the inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry'. Whatever the sin, though, the work of mortification, based on Byfield's association of that doctrine with repentance, 'hath in it, pain and sorrow' – it was not like putting sin to sleep. 'It is one thing to sleep', wrote Byfield, 'another thing to die: many men with less ado get sin asleep, that it doth not stir in them, but alas, there must be more ado to get it dead, but true mortification'. The power to kill sin, through mortification and repentance, according to Byfield, 'extinguisheth the power of sin and the vigor of it'. Byfield wrote true repentance exerted a power over the life of corrupt nature of sin that made 'it like a dead corpse,

⁹¹ Ibid.

that neither it stirs itself, nor will be stirred, by occasions, persuasions, commandments, or stokes'.⁹²

Byfield's acknowledgement of the difficulty in mortifying sin would have led Nehemiah to place an emphasis on the changes he should notice in his inner desire for and outward manifestations of piety and obedience. Byfield considered it 'a wonderful testimony of sound mortification' if an individual, through repentance, was able to achieve the kind of death to sin in the body that he described. Toning down his language, he simply wrote that what should flow out of a 'sound mortification (was) constancy in prayer and hearing and daily confession and sorrow for sin... especially if we strive with God and be earnest with spiritual importunity, watching the way of our own hearts, to wound sin so soon as we see it begin to stir'. Byfield admitted that such a 'sound mortification' was something that not every 'Christian could attain'. Nay, 'such a victory over sin, that it should not be in him at all, nor that he should ever be stirred with the temptations or enticements or occasions of evil' is not his meaning; his meaning was 'that in some measure and in the most sins a Christian doth find it so, and in every sin his desire and endeavor is daily have it so. And his desire is not without some happy success, so as sin dieth or lieth a dying everyday'. In other words, for Byfield, a more realistic goal to set in the practice of mortification had to do with small victories and a feeling of displeasure over sinful acts and affections.⁹³

Byfield's discussion concerning the location of sin would have particularly influenced Nehemiah's to attempt reform by trying better to control his body. According to Byfield's study of Colossians 3:5, sin was located in what the Apostle

⁹² Ibid., p. 30.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 30 – 31.

Paul referred to as the ‘members’ of the body.⁹⁴ ‘Members’ was another word for which Byfield derived a myriad of possible meanings. ‘It is certain’, Byfield assured his readers, ‘that by members on earth, the Apostle means sin, and that fitly’. For Byfield, the word ‘fitly’ was meant to describe the notion of different parts that extended from one main core or fundamental source of sin. This was because, in Byfield’s estimation, ‘actual sins, in relation to original sin, are so many members that grow from it’. In other words, Byfield viewed the power of sin as diffuse and able to affect the individual in a number of ways because of a fundamental debility in human nature. Byfield explained this idea by way of ‘metonymy’, or interpreting the meaning of the word ‘members’ by applying its common meaning to the various parts (members) of the body: ‘sin may be called our members, because it is brought into action by the help and service of our members’. In other words, the actual members of an individual’s anatomy were culpable in sin. (This was not an absurd idea, especially in the context of the New Testament. In Matthew 5:27 – 30, Jesus told his hearers that if their eye caused them to sin, to gouge it out; if their right hand was the reason for their disobedience, to cut it off.) Of course, Byfield conjectured, the Apostle also may have employed the word ‘members’ here as simply a figure of speech, because ‘wicked men... love sin as they love their members: and therefore to take away their sin, is to pull out their eyes, or to cut off their hand or feet’. (This was the probable meaning of Jesus’ recommendation to gouge out an eye or cut off a hand.) However, faced with these various interpretations of possible meanings for the word ‘members’, Byfield finally wrote that perhaps the Apostle had in mind ‘the body of sin (that) is already cast off and destroyed in you by your former repentance, but yet there remains some limbs of sin, some members of it’. In this way, Byfield seemed to return to the

⁹⁴ For Nehemiah, the meaning of ‘members’ and the power of sin in the body was influenced by his reading of the Bible and other books, as well as his view of melancholy. See pp. 167 – 170, 198 – 199, and 207 of this thesis.

notion that sin is a separate type of organism or living substance within the individual, with diffuse parts and extensions that affected the individual in various ways.

According to Byfield, sin operated differently in ‘godly men’ as opposed to ‘wicked men’ because it worked through limbs or ‘members’ rather than affecting the whole body. ‘For in wicked men there is the whole body of sin, that is all their sin, unremitted and unrepented’, but in godly men, ‘only some few members of their sins remain, which everyday molest them’.⁹⁵ To sum up, in Byfield’s interpretation of the word ‘members’, it was the presence of sin throughout either the anatomy or inner being of an individual that produced, to a greater or lesser degree, sinful desires and behaviors. It was possible that Nehemiah could have read this commentary on Colossians 3:5 in the years after his stepsiblings’ death, and, from that reading, sought to control those members of his body which, according to Byfield, helped bring sin into action.

Nehemiah’s early understanding of mortification also resembled the influence of his attempt to read complex sermons like those offered in the works of Thomas Adams. Printed sermons, in the early seventeenth century, could be just as technical and complex as commentaries on Scripture. Oftentimes, in print, a preacher would even elaborate on what he might have said when he delivered the sermon orally. The prebendary of Canterbury, Thomas Jackson, wrote of the advantages of print in 1622, writing that print allowed the preacher to make his message ‘more memorable (affording greater leave to pause and consider) and also of longer continuance’.⁹⁶ This perhaps more ornate and sophisticated approach from the words presented in the pulpit to the printed sermon no doubt suited Adams. According to one biographer, Adams’ contemporaries not only viewed him as an ‘Excellent Preacher’, but also as

⁹⁵ Byfield, *An exposition upon the Epistle to the Colossians*, p. 30.

⁹⁶ Thomas Jackson, *Judah Must into Captivity, Six Sermons*, (London, 1622), ir – v, quoted in Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 125; see also Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, p. 161.

‘one of the more considerable literary talents of the seventeenth century’. Some even described Adams, as a writer, as the ‘prose Shakespeare of puritan theologians... scarcely inferior to Fuller in wit or to Taylor in Fancy’. The popularity of Adams among his fellow preachers, though, was not the only reason that Nehemiah could have read Adams. According to his biographer, Adams’ books appear to have been ‘highly visible’ from the 1610s to the mid 1620s. Nehemiah could have also heard Adams preach in person, but this would have occurred after the time period that concerns this chapter. Adams did not arrive in London until 1619, taking up the position of rector at both St. Benet Paul’s Wharf and St. Benet Sherehog.⁹⁷

For all the accolades and esteem for Adams’ eloquence among his university trained peers, laymen like Nehemiah would have encountered a very dense and complicated discussion of mortification in Adams’ *The devil’s banquet* (1614). In this book, Adams started his discussion of mortification by reflecting on the meaning of death, the afterlife, and the power of sin in the body in the form of a puzzling question: ‘How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?’ From this question, Adams asserted that it simply made no sense that a Christian, who was supposedly dead to sin, nevertheless continued to commit sin. For Adams, ‘A dead nature cannot work’. Adams reasoned, however, that the influence of sin in the life of a Christian remained in a manner of degrees. ‘We sin indeed’, wrote Adams, ‘not because we are dead to sin, but because (we are) not dead enough’. For Adams, sin still persisted because the body of the individual was still alive, and sin was a part of the body’s natural condition. What do you expect, suggested Adams: ‘Would to God you were yet more dead, that you might yet more live’. Such a desire would not be ridiculous, according to Adams. In fact, Adams called the desire for the death of sin in

⁹⁷ J. Sears McGee, ‘Adams, Thomas (1583–1652)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

the body as a gift from God's grace for 'mortification'. This sounded very much like Thomas à Kempis' and Calvin's view of mortification, but, according to Adams, even the wicked have a desire for mortification, or an end to their misdeeds, which, he argued, was also of 'grace'. True mortification, wrote Adams, was something only a pious Christian could experience, and was indicated by peace of conscience for sin and the courage to face death with the hope of rising to eternal life. For when Christians die, wrote Adams, these are 'good deaths'; these are 'blessed souls, that are thus dead'. The death of the body, according to Adams, was the ultimate form of mortification, the death of sin, and for those Christian who had led a life affected by the grace of mortification, they would 'like the Phoenix', rise from the dead, 'new born; their old man's Autumn is their new man's Spring-tide'. In Adams' estimation, death for a pious Christian was preferable to those that continued to live in the body but suffer from a lack of mortification. For those individuals who did not pursue mortification, they lived with 'seared consciences, poisoned affections, warped, withered, rotten souls'. There was, though, some benefit in death for those who did not pursue mortification. According to Adams, while these individuals would enter their grave find themselves 'twice dead', experiencing, in other words, a 'continual death'; the death of their body would bring an end to their fight with a twisted and perverted life.⁹⁸ One can see how a reading of these statements might have led Nehemiah to consider suicide from 1618 to 1623, but Nehemiah's early attempt to reform his life from within, from 1609 to 1618, were possibly influenced by his attention to another passage in Adams' *The devil's banquet* (1614). In this passage, according to Adams, mortification was a process by which a man overcame himself: 'By overcoming himself, he is overcome of himself'. Adams continued in this

⁹⁸ Adams, *The devil's banquet*, p. 167.

passage by seeming to suggest that mortification was about mastering the sinful self and controlling of sinful desires: ‘Whilst he overrules his lusts, his soul rules him’. This was a violent process, as evident in the following words from Adams: ‘When the outward cold rageth with greatest violence, the inward heat is more and more effectual. When Death hath killed and stilled concupiscence, the heart begins to live. This war makes our peace’.⁹⁹

Perhaps the greatest impact of those materials that Nehemiah would have read and that inspired his early attempt to reform his life by controlling the sinful tendencies of his body was not so much the answers they gave, but the confusion they caused, which might have spurred him on to pursue other pietistic helps such as listening to sermons. As noted in the previous chapter, Nehemiah claimed to frequently attend the preaching of God’s Word, an obsession that seemed to commence as part of his efforts to perform ‘holy duties’ in the years after his stepsiblings’ death. He wrote, in his narrative of those years, that he tried to conform his life to a godly pattern, not only in devotional practices with his family and in private, but also ‘with often going to church on the weekdays’. He would eventually confess to hearing nineteen sermons in one week. He also filled at least two notebooks with notes and copies of sermons.¹⁰⁰ As with books, Nehemiah’s attendance at sermons and even his efforts to take notes and copy sermons into his manuscripts did not mean that he avoided the possibility of misinterpreting a preacher’s message.¹⁰¹ Preachers, in the early seventeenth century, were quite aware of a gap that existed between what they said in the pulpit and what those in their

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 164 – 165.

¹⁰⁰ See pp. 68 -70 of this thesis.

¹⁰¹ Arnold Hunt has suggested that just because an individual may have taken notes at sermon-time did not mean that ‘a gap between the preacher’s intentions and the hearer’s’ reception and interpretation of that message did not exist. See *The Art of Hearing*, pp. 72 and 95. See also Cohen, *God’s Caress*, p. 188.

congregations might have heard. In order to remedy any problems that could arise from this scenario, some of those preachers devised strategies to test what their parishioners took away or remembered from sermons.¹⁰² As for Nehemiah, he admitted in his manuscripts that he often had a hard time staying awake in sermons and lectures, a tendency for which he often felt guilty.¹⁰³ Perhaps part of his note taking and copying of sermons into manuscripts was done in an effort to stay awake and pay closer attention.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, it is possible that, given these struggles at sermon time, whatever he heard was only part of the minister's intended message. Perhaps Nehemiah simply received what appealed to his own biases and preferences, or was awake enough to hear.

One preacher that may have contributed to Nehemiah's early view of personal reform by controlling the sinful tendencies of his body was Stephen Denison. From 1615, Denison was the preacher at St. Katherine Cree, a church located quite close to Nehemiah's home and where some of his acquaintances attended.¹⁰⁵ From Denison, Nehemiah would have heard a similar theology of mortification as that found in the funeral sermon that Denison preached for Mrs. Elizabeth Juxon on 21 November 1619 at St. Laurence Pountney Church in London. The sermon was later printed under the title *The monument or tomb-stone* (1620), a text that Nehemiah appears to have owned or at one time held in his possession.¹⁰⁶ Denison claimed in this sermon that because mortification served as the process whereby an individual put to death the

¹⁰² Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, pp. 74 – 81.

¹⁰³ GL MS 204, fols. 21 – 22. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 46.

¹⁰⁴ On note taking as a way to grasp and remember what was said in a sermon, see Hunt, *The Art of Hearing*, pp. 94 – 114.

¹⁰⁵ See pp. 9 -11 of this thesis for Nehemiah's account of a lady who suddenly fell dead after arguing with another lady at St. Katherine Cree. Elizabeth Juxon was the mother of Thomas Juxon, the parliamentarian activist and diarist. See Keith Lindley, 'Juxon, Thomas (1614–1672)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also, Anna Bayman, 'Denison, Stephen (d. 1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ A copy of Denison's printed sermon now held in the British Library bears a comment from 'Nehemiah Wallington' on the final page. See Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 7 n. 13.

sins of the flesh and led a more virtuous life, it was an especial benefit for Christians when it came time to die. ‘There is nothing which makes death terrible or troublesome unto God’s child’, wrote Denison, ‘but sin’. Therefore, those who chose not to pursue mortification in this life, according to Denison, who ‘would not be ruled’, should expect the time of death to be more difficult. Denison weighed this opinion against those who had approached their time of death in the past without mortification, and determined that ‘their end hath been commonly uncomfortable’. In consideration of these examples, Denison wrote, ‘Therefore my dear brother and sister, whosoever thou art, let my counsel be available with thee; cast away all thy transgressions whereby thou has transgressed’. In other words, repent, and ‘spare not thy bosom sins’. ‘For’, according to Denison, ‘every sin which thou keepest unmortified, doth threaten to make death uncomfortable’. ¹⁰⁷

Nehemiah would have especially learned from listening to Denison preach on controlling the sinful tendencies of the body that it demanded ‘daily practice’ and focused attention of the will. For Denison, mortification was an act of determination. ‘Hast thou mortified lust’, wrote Denison, ‘mortify also covetousness; hast thou mortified covetousness, mortify also pride: hast thou mortified pride, mortify also rash anger’. ‘In a word’, asked Denison, ‘hast thou mortified some sin?’ If not, ‘strive to mortify all sin. For assure thyself, if thou keep any one sin alive, it will be bitterness in the end’. Denison’s message did resemble a traditional view of mortification when it came to a discussion of vanity or an inordinate affection for worldly things. In reflection on the end of one Mrs. Elizabeth Juxon’s life, an apparently wealthy woman, Denison requested that ‘God grant that every one of us may labor for the like grace of sound mortification. For, if we be dead and crucified

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Denison, *The monument or tombstone: or, A sermon preached at Laurence Pountnies Church in London*, (London, 1620), pp. 71 -72.

unto the world, it is a good thing that we are alive to God'. He based this interpretation on a reading of Job's suffering and the life of the deceased Mrs. Juxon. 'Was Job brought by his sickness to the sight of the vanity of earthly things? So was this servant of God (Elizabeth Juxon)'. Denison described how Mrs. Juxon 'had attained an holy scorn of the contentments of this life'. In her last days, Denison reported how he 'demanded of her, whether the comeliness of the room where she lay, and furniture of her house did not somewhat tempt her to desire still to live'? According to Denison's account of Mrs. Juxon's response to this question, Mrs. Juxon replied, 'That nothing in the world did move her to desire life, no not her very children, which were far more dear unto her, than any worldly riches whatsoever'. This response led Denison to surmise that he found Mrs. Juxon 'was quite dead to the world in her mind, before she was dead or deprived of life in her body'. Mrs. Juxon's 'desire of the practice of mortification' indeed caused Denison to conclude that she bore one of the marks of being a child of God. To meet this qualification, she needed to 'possess a desire of the practice of mortification of sins past and present'; there would also have to be 'no sin but (that which she) could willingly judge (herself) for it, so soon as (she) know it to be a sin'. According to Denison, Mrs. Juxon met this requirement of mortification and demonstrated that she bore this mark of the child of God because 'she did not only quite forsake the practice' of her especial (or particular) sins, but loathed them inwardly, and confessed to the glory of God, that she found herself quite dead to the least pleasing motion tending that way'. Her especial sin was the abuse of 'things lawful', but she had come so 'far to be mortified, as that she was tempted to abhor even the lawful use'. Denison proclaimed that Mrs. Juxon's pursuit of mortification had advanced so far that she was 'inclined not only to an unholy revenge upon her self, but even to exceed in that revenge and self-judging'.

‘What greater sign that we shall escape the judgment of God, than if we judge ourselves’, asked Denison.¹⁰⁸

One of the most highly regarded London preachers who more than probably influenced Nehemiah’s early understanding of controlling the sinful tendencies of his body was William Gouge. Gouge had arrived in London, in 1608, a year before the death of Nehemiah’s stepsiblings, taking up a post at St. Anne Blackfriars. By 1615, Gouge’s pulpit was one of the most well known in the City. That Nehemiah was familiar with Gouge and respected him was evident in his decision not only to purchase a book written by Gouge several years later, in 1622, but also by his efforts to follow Gouge’s advice.¹⁰⁹ In his *A short catechism wherein are briefly laid down the fundamental principles of the Christian religion* (1616), Gouge, like Byfield, seemed to associate mortification with repentance. He started his discussion of the topic by answering the question ‘What are the parts of repentance?’ with the statement ‘Mortification, which is a ceasing to sin’.¹¹⁰ However, in his *The whole armor of God: or A Christian’s spiritual furniture, to keep him safe from all the assaults of Satan First preached, and now the second time published and enlarged for the good of all such as well use it* (1619), Gouge expanded this view. He included his discussion of mortification under the topic of religious fasting. A ‘religious fast’, according to Gouge, was a particular ‘help to extraordinary prayer’ which ‘consisteth partly of affection, and partly in continuance of time’. In other words, Gouge suggested that an individual should engage in fasting as a way to assist his or her efforts at ardent and persistent prayer. An individual did this, according to Gouge, for blessings, ‘if they be withheld’, or in times of judgments or the fear of judgment – in

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 101 – 102.

¹⁰⁹ See pp. 184 – 185 of this thesis.

¹¹⁰ William Gouge, *A short catechism wherein are briefly laid down the fundamental principles of the Christian religion*, (London, 1616), p. 13.

fear of judgment the individual could pursue fasting and offer prayer ‘either to free us from temptations unto (as Paul prayed with great ardency, saying, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death), or to pardon such sins as have been committed, and lie heavy upon your conscience’.¹¹¹ In Gouge’s estimation, the greatest hindrance to extraordinary prayer and a cause for fasting stemmed from difficulty in controlling ‘the lusts of the flesh, and the wanton affections thereof’. Gouge wrote that the ‘the lusts of the flesh’ were ‘as birdlime to the feathers of a fowl, which keep it from mounting high’, they ‘continually fight against the spirit, and are a means to quench it; so as the spirit is kept from making requests for us, so long as lust boileth and domineereth in us’. Gouge defined mortification as a process whereby the lusts of the flesh were ‘beaten down, and brought into subjection’. His discussion of mortification in the context of fasting, though, offered a further explanation of where he believed the lusts of the flesh originated. For Gouge, fasting involved more than simply the deprivation of food: it also included other bodily comforts and pleasures. Gouge wrote that fasting helped prevent pious individuals from ‘pampering our bodies’. The lusts of the flesh, therefore, and the object of mortification was a source within the individual that created a desire for physical ease. Gouge declared that fasting was a means to ‘mortifieth’ this source, and ‘keepeth it down’.¹¹²

There were certainly more preachers, less prominent than Gouge, who could have influenced Nehemiah to reform his life and be better by combating the sinful desires and behaviors produced by his body, just as there were more printed sources and even graphic representations that could have done the same. However, other than

¹¹¹ Gouge, *The whole-armor of God*, p. 454.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 462 – 463. While Gouge primarily focused on abstaining from food in his discussion of fasting, he did mention other things from which an individual could abstain. See also Gouge, *The whole-armor of God*, pp. 451 – 454.

the Bible and an edition of John Brinsley's *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615), Nehemiah neglected to share what those sources might have been. The purpose of this chapter has been to examine those sources that were available to Nehemiah in early seventeenth century London, and to consider how those sources (and the ideas those sources contained) were encountered by Nehemiah through the reconstruction of patterns and practices in a particular reading culture. Because Nehemiah did not clearly identify what books he read and sermons he heard in this period from his life, it is impossible to identify with certainty what those sources were. The purpose and importance of this reconstruction and examination, however, has been to understand better what Nehemiah meant when he declared four decades after his stepsiblings' death that his attempt to reform his life by performing 'holy duties' was based on the belief that something – a power, an ability - was not within him. Without this later perspective, Nehemiah claimed that his failure to succeed in his efforts to reform after his stepsiblings' death caused his 'little conscience' to 'chide' him.¹¹³

The conclusion to be drawn from the exploration of the materials in this chapter is that the ideas or sources that influenced Nehemiah to reform his life in the manner that he did after his stepsiblings' death reflected his attempt to control his sin through an understanding and application of the Christian doctrine of mortification. The next chapter will examine how the chiding of Nehemiah's conscience due to his failure to control his sin lay at the root of his eleven temptations either to run away from home or negate his 'self' by suicide, from 1618 to 1623.

¹¹³ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

Chapter Four

The temptation of suicide, 1618 - 1623

Nehemiah's struggles to understand and respond to the death of his stepsiblings in 1609 by controlling his sinful desires and behaviors came to a head in May 1618. On a day in this month, Nehemiah traveled with his church's minister, Master Henry Roborough, and another man, Master Burnet, five miles south from Nehemiah's home in London to the village of Lewisham. In the course of that journey, the twenty-year old Nehemiah overheard Master Burnet tell Master Roborough that 'honey and sack was rank poison, for he had drunk some'. The mixture had in fact made Master Burnet 'so sick that he thought he should not recover his health again'. If Master Burnet had a reason for drinking the honey and sack, and stated that reason in his conversation with Roborough that day, Nehemiah did not record it into his manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance'. Perhaps the absence of an explanation was due to the commonality of the mixture. The mixture of honey with sack, or sugar with wine, had long been a practice of vintners and oenophiles to increase the alcohol content of wine or sweeten the taste of ripe or sour grapes.¹ Both substances were also used in a number of early modern

¹ Sack is/was a white wine made in Spain and the Canary Islands. See 'sack' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. On mixing sugar or honey with wine, see Daniel Sogg, 'Inside Wine: Chaptalization', *Wine Spectator*, (March, 2002); Rod Philips, *A Short History of Wine*, (Hammersmith: Harper Perennial, 2002), pp. 195 -196; or Hugh Johnson, *Vintage: The Story of Wine*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 395. References to the mixture of honey and wine in ancient civilizations can be found in Homer's *Odysseys*, translated according to the Greek by Geo. Chapman, (London, 1615), pp. 151 and 158.

household remedies for minor ailments such as sore back, sour stomach, or bad-breath.² Nehemiah did not suggest in his manuscripts that he knew anything of or was interested in these various practices. The absence of any further information regarding the mixture in Nehemiah's manuscript was likely due to what interested him, or what he chose to remember from the conversation: that the mixture had made Master Burnet so sick that he thought he would die. For, fourteen days after his journey to Lewisham, when Nehemiah was alone in the high garret of his father's house, he experienced great spiritual temptation. He wrote in his manuscript that 'Satan told' him his 'sins were many and great and that God had forsaken' him. The 'Devil' then tempted him to try the mixture of honey and sack as Master Burnet had done. Nehemiah submitted to this temptation and bought a 'penny's worth of sack and mingled it with some honey and drunk it'. The strategy failed, however, and the mixture did not make him sick, not 'one jot'. This episode marked Nehemiah's first attempt to commit suicide.³

From May 1618 to May 1623, Nehemiah attempted to run away from home or commit suicide on eleven separate occasions. Some have interpreted these attempts as

² On honey and sack used in home remedies, see Hieronymus Brunschwig, *A most excellent and perfect homish apothecary or homely physic book, for all the griefs and diseases of the body*, Ihon Hollybush, trans., (1561); Thomas Brasbridge, *The poor man's level, that is to say, A treatise of the pestilence unto the which is annexed a declaration of the virtues of the herbs Cardus Benedictus, and agelica, which are very medicinable, both against the plague, but also against other diseases/ gathered out of the books of diverse learned physicians*, (1578); A. T., practitioner in physic, *A rich store-house or treasury for the diseased Wherein are many approved medicines for diverse and sundry diseases*, (London, 1596). Oliver Goldsmith also mentioned 'sack and sugar' in his essay on the famous Boar's Head Tavern, which was located close to Nehemiah's home in Eastcheap. See Oliver Smith, 'Essay V', *Miscellaneous works*, Washington Irving ed., (Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1849), p. 483.

³ GL MS 204, fol.2. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 33. The word 'suicide' is used here and throughout this chapter interchangeably with the term 'self-murder'. The author is aware that these terms, historically speaking, can refer to different interpretations of an act of self-accomplished death, or the voluntary destruction of the body. However, the purpose of this chapter is not to discuss these interpretations. As indicated below, the purpose of this chapter is to examine why Nehemiah attempted to kill or destroy his body. For a discussion of the differences of the various terms used to refer to 'suicide' in early modern England and Europe, see Ian Marsh, *Suicide: Foucault, History and Truth*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 79 – 99, and Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), chapter one.

symptoms of an overwhelming despair caused simply by a Protestant theology that Nehemiah grasped and comprehended from Puritan sermons and books. As stated in the previous chapter, according to this argument, this theology emphasized the sinfulness of human nature and the need for a personal experience of or the awareness of experiencing ‘conversion’ – as David Booy puts it, conversion centered around a ‘psychological phenomenon’ where the individual comes to believe fully in a change that has taken place in his or her ‘inner person’ through the ‘full redemptive power of God’s grace’.⁴ In other words, overwrought by beliefs regarding his sinful condition and his failure to perceive a change in this condition, this theory suggests that Nehemiah was tempted to run away or commit suicide out of an intense and inner psychological concern for spiritual transformation. In contrast to this premise, the previous chapter suggested that, in the years after his stepsiblings’ death and leading up to his temptations, Nehemiah’s manuscripts evidence a struggle to control his sinful behavior according to a strength and power that he believed was within him. Later in his life, Nehemiah confessed that he had come to believe that this approach to reform was based upon an incorrect assumption – he stated (by way of reference to Jeremiah 10:23) that ‘the ways of man is not in himself’.⁵ What Nehemiah seemed to mean by this was that, in the years leading up to the period of his temptations, he was influenced by an incorrect or at the very least an insufficient understanding of what he heard or read in a variety of possible sources that included the Bible, other books, and sermons. A failure to experience or perceive that he had experienced divine grace or

⁴ Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 14 -15, 23 – 25, 26 – 27. On the meaning of ‘conversion’ according to this theory, see also Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*, pp. 1 – 14, and Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, chapter 2, especially 15-17 and 23-24. While Seaver does indicate the importance of ‘living out’ the implications of the Reformed Protestant doctrines of ‘justification’ and ‘predestination’ during the temptations, he nevertheless refers to Wallington’s ‘self-absorption’ during the period as leaving him ‘largely incurious’ of the ‘thoughts and feelings even of those closest to him’. According to Seaver, Nehemiah’s account of the temptations only expresses ‘a sympathetic, if baffled, concern for his family’. More will be said about Seaver’s view of Nehemiah’s concern for personal conversion in the next chapter.

⁵ See pp. 97 - 98 of this thesis.

conversion, therefore, does not seem to have been a catalyst for his attempts to run away or commit self-murder. Instead, the evidence from his manuscripts indicates that any troubles he may have encountered (the temptation to run away or take his own life) were based on his incorrect understanding of the ideas presented in these sources, which led him to try and reform his life according to his own strength and determination. Even more than this, though, it is important to consider that his efforts to reform his life at this time involved more than an attempt to achieve a godly ‘self’ out of a purely personal or individualistic concern. Nehemiah testified that his pursuit of reform was done out of regard for and in the context of his family. He wrote in his last extant manuscript that his aim was to cease from episodes where, as he put it, he would break out ‘in disobedience to my parents and quarreling and other sins’.⁶

While previous studies of Nehemiah’s temptations to commit suicide have focused primarily on the influence of Puritan theology on his mind, this chapter will examine how Nehemiah understood and sought to apply that theology to the circumstances that confronted him in the world, especially at home. A lack of attention to these circumstances has led to a view of Nehemiah’s spirituality as something that removed him from life experiences. In order to redirect this interpretation, the questions that guide the examination of Nehemiah’s temptations in this chapter are: what were the state of Nehemiah’s relationships with others, especially those closest to him at the time of his temptations? What were his day-to-day responsibilities in the world around him? Did Nehemiah’s success or failure in those relationships and responsibilities have anything to do with the onset of his temptations, and, if so, how did those successes and failures not only influence his desire for death by suicide, but also his perception and pursuit of Reformed Protestant

⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

theology?⁷ Building on the discussion in previous chapters, the argument here in response to these questions will be that Nehemiah's failure to reform his life after his stepsiblings' death in 1609 (to construct a more godly 'self' by his pursuit of piety and control his sin) was increasingly perceived by him as a failure and inability to engage with society in a Christian manner. This predicament led him to despair and experience the temptation to negate his 'self' by suicide: not out of a desire to experience or perceive his experience of divine grace or conversion, but out of disappointment with his attempts to be better and have greater care over his ways. Even after his suicide attempts, Nehemiah's desire to reform his life, according to his own strength and determination, continued. This was revealed in his repeated attempts to adjust his approach and re-commit himself to piety that he might fulfill his obligations to others, especially his family.⁸ While he did not express his experience or an awareness that he had experienced conversion, Nehemiah did communicate in his manuscripts a change in his understanding and view of death as a result of his temptations: that change was in his willingness to accept his sinful tendencies and to hope in the possibility of a future deliverance from his sin by continuing to make adjustments to his piety rather than escaping his life with others by suicide.

We learn about Nehemiah's attempts to run away and commit suicide from his earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance', and his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books'. Nehemiah described each suicide attempt in a narrative of the period 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful

⁷ The word 'social' is used here primarily in reference to Nehemiah's associations at work and home. See 'social' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

⁸ On the significance of perceived obligations in family life for Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans in early modern England, see Margo Todd, 'Humanists, Puritans, and the Spiritualized Household', *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, March 1980, Vol. 49, 18 – 34.

Remembrance’ as the ‘eleven sore Temptations of Satan’.⁹ While at the beginning of that narrative he wrote that all eleven temptations occurred in the year 1618 to 1619, according to the evidence supplied in ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance’, his last or ‘eleventh’ temptation to commit suicide occurred in May 1623. In his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all my Writing Books’, written in 1654, Nehemiah offered an abridged account of the circumstances that surrounded his temptations.¹⁰ He was fifty-six years old and would die four years later.¹¹ The information regarding his temptations recorded in both his earliest extant manuscript and his last extant manuscript are important. In the earliest extant manuscript, Nehemiah presented a more detailed account of each temptation and his belief as to why he suffered from those temptations. In his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah focused on the context and motivation for writing the entire manuscript in which those accounts were held. Therefore, while written at different times in his life, when read together, both manuscripts offer the reader a more complete depiction of the temptations and what inspired him to write the experience of those temptations down on paper.

Nehemiah’s record of his attempts to run away and commit suicide, reveals that in the years he suffered from temptation (from 1618 to 1623) he experienced many changes to his outward circumstances, which were complicated by his inner troubles with conscience. These were the years that Nehemiah attempted to make the transition from dependent youth to independent adult. In May 1618, he turned twenty-

⁹ GL MS 204, fol. 1. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 32. On Satan, Wallington did no more than blame the Devil for the inner workings of his desire to commit suicide. He did not offer an explanation or any sort of demonology as to how the Devil manipulated or influenced that desire. The personification of evil impulses or behavior in the form Satan or the Devil was a common and widespread practice in early modern England. See Michael MacDonald, *Mystical bedlam: madness, anxiety, and healing in seventeenth-century England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 134.

¹⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

¹¹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 200. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 297.

one years of age and over the course of the next twenty four-months sought to move out of his father's house and establish his own wood-turner's shop. He wrote in his manuscript that he purposely set out 'to keep house', and noted that his purpose in doing so was 'for no other end' than to live alone. This initial attempt at independent living, however, 'could not be', because, as he put it, his 'tender Father caused (him) to come home and sup and lie at his house every night'. The reason for his father's concern was not unfounded. According to his manuscript, Nehemiah was suffering from what he referred to as severe 'troubles of mind'. This was his way of saying that he was suffering from anxiety due to memories and guilt produced by his conscience. He recorded in his manuscript that he was unable 'to live alone' because 'my conscience was my constant keeper'.¹²

Troubles with conscience were nothing new for Nehemiah. The same trouble had bothered him early on in his efforts to reform his life after his stepsiblings' death nine years earlier. In failing to change and do better after God had delivered him back to his father's house, Nehemiah confessed that he suffered from the 'chiding of my little conscience'.

Yet, by 1618 to 1619, Nehemiah described the troubles associated with his conscience as becoming worse: an experience of 'horror and terror' that produced 'many fearful temptations and despairing thoughts'.¹³ These horrific and terrifying thoughts did not deter Nehemiah from his efforts to live separately. He stated in his manuscript that even though he had to sleep at his father's house he bought his own bed to 'lie alone'. He would eventually achieve his independence after following the advice and assistance of his father, who 'caused' him to 'hire a Journeyman, one

¹² FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 269.

¹³ Seaver does not provide a thorough analysis of the impact of Nehemiah's conscience in his discussion of the temptations. See *Wallington's World*, pp. 21 – 27.

Edward Gale, to lie in the house' with him.¹⁴ However, the transition to independent adult and head of a separate household would continue to be complicated by his conscience.

The painful thoughts that Nehemiah attributed to the work of his conscience were not abstract thoughts or general feelings of guilt, but vivid recollections and imaginings of sins that he had committed or might commit in specific situations in the past, present, and future. This was evident in a passage found in 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books', where Nehemiah wrote that 'in this year 1618 to 1619' his conscience chided him for the sins of his 'past, present and to come'.¹⁵

In regards to the sins of his past, Nehemiah wrote in 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance' that his conscience reminded him of the sins from his childhood.¹⁶ He placed particular importance on sins committed in his 'ninth year' and how his conscience made him feel as if those sins were 'newly committed'. He remembered a time when he and his stepbrother, Philip, went into their 'Father's parlor and stole a shilling off the table where lay a heap of money'. Philip and Nehemiah took the money and purchased ale and cakes and 'went to the windmills in Finsbury Fields'. Finsbury Fields was a large, popular outdoor area located near Moorgate, just outside the city of London and north from Nehemiah's boyhood home. Nehemiah admitted that he and Philip bought more Ale than they could drink that

¹⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 11-13. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 269 -270.

¹⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 6. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 268. Nehemiah's concern for not only the inner pains of conscience caused by personal sin at times of demonic temptation, but also for how that sin affected his relationships with others suggests more than a purely individualistic piety. On the subject of early modern Protestant piety and demonic temptation in the early modern era, see Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 31.

¹⁶ My reading of Nehemiah on this point differs from that of Paul Seaver. In *Wallington's World*, Seaver does not view the sins of Nehemiah's childhood as a significant influence on his early adult years. Seaver sweeps over the impact of Nehemiah's childhood and states that Nehemiah interpreted his childhood as merely 'the first stage in his life'. See Seaver, *Wallington's World*, p. 14.

day. Philip wanted to pour the excess Ale out on the ground, but Nehemiah ‘thought it was a sin to spoil the good creatures’ who might drink it. Instead of pouring out on the ground, Nehemiah drank excess ale and became drunk. When he and Philip tried to leave and go home, Nehemiah fell over the rails that led into the Fields. At that moment, a group of people passed by and gathered round Nehemiah ‘spending their verdict’ as Philip stood ‘aloof’, ‘being ashamed’ to be viewed like his stepbrother, Nehemiah. Embarrassed in front of the strangers by his drunken condition, and left to fend for himself by Philip, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that ‘I spoke not to them, but hid my face to the earth so I was not known of any of them’. On another occasion from his childhood, Nehemiah took nine pence out of his father’s ‘shop box thinking to have kept it’, which he did until the next day when he ‘could keep it no longer’. According to his manuscript, the money he and his stepbrother stole from his father as children was like ‘fire in (his) pockets’ until he returned it because ‘a sick conscience cannot endure the sight or scent of misgotten goods’. To return the money, however, was not enough. Nehemiah declared that for ‘sixteen years did my conscience sleep’ in the memory of these sins until the 1620s when he wrote ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance’. At that time, his conscience flew in his ‘face like a mad dog’ and he tried to confess his sin to God, but ‘could find little comfort’. It was not until Nehemiah confessed his sin to his earthly father, received forgiveness from him, and repaid ‘fourfold’ what he stole, ‘as God’s law requireth’, that he finally found the ‘peace of conscience and the joy of the spirit’ that he longed for.¹⁷

¹⁷ GL MS 204, fols. 9 – 10. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 38 – 39. More will be said about this confession on pp. 180 - 181 of this thesis.

Nehemiah wrote that his conscience brought to mind present situations where he had sinned by acting ‘very quarrelsome, peevish and disobedient’.¹⁸ He associated these sins with sinful behavior that he recalled from his life at the time of his mother’s death in 1603, and at five years of age along with an incident that involved the ‘lust of (his) heart in the seventh year of (his) life’ when he and his stepbrother, Philip, were going to school. He and Philip happened by some ‘carts of carrots’ that ‘stood in Leadenhall Street’ and quickly ducked under the cart. From under the cart, they picked out a couple of carrots and ate them. He wrote in his manuscript that he could ‘remember how Philip and I were brothers in evil many times in this kind of sin in many particulars’. When Philip became sick and died in 1609 and Nehemiah was sent to stay with his grandmother to keep him from contracting the illness, he had a deeply religious experience and ‘promised the Lord that if he send me to my Father’s house again, Oh then I would have a care over my ways and do better than I had done’. When he returned to his father’s house, however, he broke those promises. He wrote in his manuscript, ‘Yet when the Lord did give me my desire and I did come to my Father’s house in safety, Oh then how many ways did I then offend my God in breaking my promises in disobedience to my parents and quarreling and other sins, which my little conscience did chide me for’.¹⁹ For seven more years, Nehemiah wrote that he tried to correct his disobedience, ‘being somewhat conformable unto holy duties’, but could not stop: he continued ‘being quarrelsome and disobedient, and other sins’ continued ‘breaking forth’ from him, which he believed reflected his present struggle with sin.²⁰

¹⁸ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 7. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 268.

¹⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 3-4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 266-267.

²⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 267.

Nehemiah's conscience also caused him to worry about future situations where he might sin because of his 'inclination', or sinful nature.²¹ As discussed previously in this thesis, he interpreted this inclination from his reading of Scripture.²² He wrote that in his last extant manuscript, while he had been born of 'Christian parents, a holy Father and a gracious Mother', such a heritage 'could not derive grace' in his soul. On 'May 12, 1598, at five o'clock in the morning' he was 'born in sin and came forth polluted into this wicked world'. He entered the world in a 'miserable condition', a product of the 'Old Adam' as much as the offspring of his earthly parents, John and Elizabeth Wallington. From an infant, his nature was infected with 'poison'; the same poison 'that is in the wickedest wretch in the world', and because of this Nehemiah believed he was 'prone to all manner of sin'.²³ Throughout his life, fearful even at the heights of his most spiritual moments, Nehemiah referred back to his belief in his corrupt nature and what this might lead him to do. In 1629, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance' that his conscience held him captive and kept him from enjoying even the smallest delight: 'profit and pleasures' were like 'conserves and marmalade to a sick man'. The thought of such enjoyments 'clammed' him and 'their very sweetness was bitter and troublesome'. The pains caused by his 'tormented conscience' at the thought of life's pleasures were worse than 'any hell upon the Earth'. Nehemiah tried to remind himself that he was 'no swearer, no drunkard, and no unclean person in gross act, nor open wicked liver'. He had 'good parents', and was 'brought up in the ways of God from a child'. He 'went to prayer' and read the bible and other devotional literature morning and evening with his father. He even read and prayed alone and often cried in repentance during those times of private devotion. He 'went to church, not only on

²¹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 7. Booy, *Notebooks of...Wallington*, 268.

²² See pp. 62 – 63 of this thesis.

²³ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 1. Booy, *Notebooks of...Wallington*, p. 266.

the Sabbath day, but also on the weekdays to the lectures'. On one occasion he had even 'heard nineteen sermons in one week'. He had 'hated and reproved the wicked, and loved all those that were godly'. He told himself that he was 'unblamable' in his dealings with others, and that he did not judge others more harshly than he judged himself. Yet, he could remind himself of these things, but his conscience was always there to remind him of the 'sight of filthiness' and 'sink of uncleanness' that was in him, and that he could not 'be anything, but what (he) was'.²⁴

The power of Nehemiah's conscience to remind him vividly of past, present, and future situations of sin seemed to make him feel trapped, and provoked a desire to escape his circumstances. This interpretation is based on the fact that his first temptation was to run away. On a Saturday in the early spring of 1618 and approaching his twentieth birthday, Nehemiah Wallington 'ran away' from home. He believed that 'Satan' had 'said' or 'put into (his) mind' that if he remained at home he would fall victim to his own 'provocations to evil' and 'weak nature'. In his account of the incident in his manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance', Nehemiah did not explain what it meant to fall victim to his 'provocations to evil' and 'weak nature'. Nevertheless, he left, in search of 'some solitary place' according to Satan's 'counsel', but knew 'not whither' he was headed. The route he chose took him north through Moorfields, an area he knew well, a town, and eventually brought him 'into a wood'. Upon entering the wood, the wind blew and rustled the leaves in the trees, which caused Nehemiah to feel 'afraid'. His 'conscience told' him that 'the wicked fleeth when none pursueth him, but the righteous are as bold as a lion and the wicked are afraid at the shaking of a leaf'.²⁵ He then 'met a man coming out of the wood with his axe on his shoulder' who asked

²⁴ GL MS 204, fols. 48 – 49. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 51.

²⁵ Nehemiah combined quotations here from Proverbs 28:1 and Leviticus 26:36. See Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 32 nn. 30 & 31.

Nehemiah where he was going? Nehemiah replied, 'his eyes being full of tears', that 'he could not tell'. The man asked if Nehemiah was a servant who had run away from his master; if so, the man advised, 'thy best way is to go home again'. The man then 'went his way' and with tears running down his cheeks Nehemiah cast his eyes 'to heaven'. He 'entreated the Lord to put in (his) mind to tarry there still in the wood or else to go home again'. The 'goodness' of the Lord 'caused' Nehemiah 'to run as fast home again' as he ran away.²⁶

The desire to escape his conscience by fleeing his circumstances continued for Nehemiah well after 1618 to 1619. In 1629, Nehemiah wrote in 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance' that he experienced an episode of a 'troubled mind'. His conscience terrified him, and he could find no 'rest, comfort and quietness', 'neither day nor night, at home or abroad in one room or other'. He often expressed his discomfort in groans and cries, saying 'many times', 'I am weary. I am weary of my life. Oh, what shall I do, whither shall I go? Fain would I die, but do not.' He could not sleep, for his thoughts were 'distempered' and kept him awake, and when he did sleep, he had 'fearful dreams' made up of horrid 'sites'. In one dream, he envisioned himself 'dead and the day of judgment was come'; he had been 'raised and stood betwixt heaven and hell', but in what direction he should go he did not know. He wrote in his manuscript that Heaven, to his 'apprehension', was a 'very spacious' place, 'glorious', with 'our Savior Jesus Christ' in its midst; around heaven he could also see 'all the saints that ever was'. Hell, was also a 'large' place, but 'deformed' and 'only a kind of fire was burning there and the damned spirits tearing one another'. Yet, even the glories of heaven and the deformed appearance of hell could not persuade Nehemiah. He remained perplexed and unmoved, with 'one foot in heaven',

²⁶ GL MS 204, fols. 1-2. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 32-33.

bewildered by the question 'oh whither shall I go'. He awoke from the dream paranoid and in a 'maze', or state of amazement. He took the vision as a 'great warning of God to have greater care' over his life, but could not move about the house. He wrote in his manuscript that he 'was very fearful for I could go in no room alone, but I was afraid I should meet one thing or other'. He ran up and down the stairs as fast as he could, 'as if some came running after me, saying with Cain that everyone that meet me would kill me'. Still, he desired to be alone and continued to move from room to room and even went away to the country. He fled to the sea and stayed for a fortnight. He went to York and came away not knowing where he was headed. He concluded from this episode that his conscience was a powerful and perhaps even violent internal mechanism.²⁷

In the spring and early winter months of 1618, Nehemiah would attempt a more permanent escape from the pains caused by his conscience, through suicide. His second attempt to take his own life occurred after going to the garret of his father's house to pray, a ritual that he confessed to practice as he 'found a great deal of comfort in prayer'. On this particular occasion, after he finishing his praying, he went to the window of the garret and 'looked up unto heaven and seeing the stars'. He considered 'God's glorious creatures' and meditated on 'what a glorious place heaven' was. This meditation brought him 'peace in (his) conscience', and he felt 'ravished with the favor of God'. He lamented, though, how this brief moment of 'joy would not continue long'. He wrote in his manuscript that the Devil then tempted him 'to leap out of the garret window into the Scalding Hall'. The Scalding Hall was where the carcasses of dead pigs were scalded in order to remove the bristle from their skin. Nehemiah wrote that he almost jumped into the Hall, as he had 'much

²⁷ GL MS 204, fols. 47-48. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 30-31.

adieu to resist temptation', but God, 'out of his great love and mercy', caused Nehemiah to go downstairs as fast as he could.²⁸

On another occasion in the garret of his father's house, Nehemiah thought's of suicide led focused on about what a 'woeful case' he was 'by reason' of his sin. He went over to the window and looked out at what he assumed was a garret of Old Paul's Cross, a site where many famous preachers preached out in the open in Wallington's day. Peering out that religious landmark, he was confronted by the Devil. This time Satan tempted him to hang himself and Nehemiah asked the Devil, 'what shall I hang myself with?' Satan replied, 'take a rope of out of the trash bag'. At that point, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that he 'considered with myself if I should do so what woeful sight would this be to those that should come upstairs first, and who would carry these heavy and doleful tidings to my Father with dry eyes, and what heavy news will this be to my old Father, my brothers and sisters, and the rest of my Christian friends'. He then left the room and went downstairs. He believed the decision to flee was the result of God's 'wonted mercies'.²⁹

As his suicide attempts continued, Nehemiah began increasingly to long for God's mercy to help him. This was reflected in an attempt that occurred just before the start of Lent. He wrote in his manuscript that he got into a quarrel with one of the 'folks' who had come for dinner at his parent's house. The argument greatly bothered Nehemiah as he was already 'troubled in (his) mind' before the party. In addition to his troubled mind, after the argument, he also felt grief for his behavior. This caused him to leave the table and go upstairs to his parent's bedchamber where he considered whether or not he should 'leap out of the gutter into Pudding Lane'. As he opened the window to jump, his brother John and his father's apprentice, Nathaniel Goody, came

²⁸ GL MS 204, fol. 3. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 33.

²⁹ GL MS 204, fol. 3. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 34.

in and ‘persuaded’ Nehemiah ‘to come down and be quiet’. Nehemiah yielded to his brother and the apprentice and returned downstairs, presumably to rejoin the party. However, the worries caused by the argument at dinner did not go away. The next time his family had a party, Nehemiah tried to avoid the company altogether. He wrote in his manuscript that when the ‘folks’ came around for supper again, he chose to fast for ‘one day and a half’. Yet, his decision to avoid the possibility of arguing with company at dinner parties could not keep him from the troubles of his conscience and the temptation to commit suicide. On another occasion, while ‘the folks were at dinner the Devil tempted’ Nehemiah to ‘buy some of the worst apples (he) he could buy’, and eat them while he was fasting. He gave into the Devil’s temptation this time and ate as many apples as he could to poison himself. He wrote in his manuscript that he thought eating the apples might bring him ‘some hurt’. The ingestion of the apples, though, did not harm him. He continued to look for away to kill himself and found a way that pleased him when he and his father’s apprentice, Nathaniel Goody, purchased a pint of ‘aniseed water’. After purchasing the substance, Nathaniel told Nehemiah to keep it in his chest, but when he ‘was in trouble again’ Satan tempted Nehemiah to go upstairs and drink ‘a great deal of it’. This time Nehemiah became very ill. He wrote in his manuscript that he was ‘very sick’ until he vomited the next morning. Again, he attributed his recovery to the mercy of God.³⁰

The desire for God’s mercy was due to Nehemiah’s inability to reason himself out of his situation. He simply could not find a practical way to remedy his struggle with sin and the emotional turmoil caused by his conscience. This was evident in a temptation to commit suicide that occurred during Lent in 1619. Between midnight and one o’clock in the morning, Nehemiah was alone in his father’s shop. While he

³⁰ GL MS 204, fol. 4. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 34.

paced around in the dark, he meditated on ‘the words of Jesus Christ: that he that looketh after a woman and lusteth in his heart after her hath committed adultery in his heart’. At the time, this verse greatly troubled and perplexed Nehemiah. He had never even had sex before. He asked himself, ‘could this sin be laid to my charge and I never found the sweetness of it’. He reasoned that he should go ahead and commit the sin in the ‘full act’ if his punishment should be ‘all one’. This reasoning, however, made matters worse. Nehemiah ‘found’ himself in an ‘abundance of sin’ and thought because of his thinking he ‘should fall into’ his own iniquity ‘one time or other’. He felt that even if he escaped the temptation of Satan at that particular moment, he would surely be overcome ‘at last’. He told himself, therefore, ‘better to destroy myself now’, for the ‘longer thou livest, the more sin thou will commit’.³¹

For a brief time, Nehemiah’s thinking even led him to consider more violent methods of suicide. He wrote in ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance’ that with the seventh temptation the Devil tempted him ‘to take a knife and cut his own throat’. Nehemiah resisted, but was tempted to slit his throat twice more. With his eighth temptation he tried to cut his throat again and ‘yielded’. He recorded in his manuscript that he ‘pulled out my knife and put it near my throat’. He narrowly escaped by thinking of those who might find him or suffer the pains of hearing the news of his death. He asked himself how the news would affect his family: What would happen ‘when my Father [came] to hear of it, it would be a means of his death also, and what a grief would it be to my brothers and sisters.’ He also wondered how such a violent death would hurt his ‘Christian friends’ and the reputation of his Reformed Protestant beliefs. He asked rhetorically in his manuscript, ‘How would this open the mouths of the wicked to speak ill of our profession?’ He

³¹ GL MS 204, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 35.

imagined the response for those who did not share his beliefs: 'for thus would they say: Look on these Puritans: see Master Wallington's son hath killed himself and so I should bring a slander upon our religion'. These reflections then caused him to fall 'out a weeping' and he 'flung away' the knife.³²

Nehemiah's state of mind deteriorated to the point where, toward the end of his suicide attempts in the spring of 1619, he began to have visions. The temptations of the Devil to escape the pains of his conscience by suicide became more than just a voice. Nehemiah began to have visions of Satan. The Devil took on different forms – animate and inanimate. This was evidenced in his ninth temptation, which took place in the spring of 1619. On that occasion, Satan tempted Nehemiah 'to open the door and go down the lane to the waterside and leap into the Thames and drown' himself. Death by drowning, however, seemed 'too sudden'. He returned, therefore, to the idea of poison, a method of suicide he 'liked best of all'. In his father's shop after work one day, he considered ratsbane, a poison used to kill rats but was suddenly interrupted when Lydia, his father's maid, entered the room. Lydia asked Nehemiah what he was doing in the shop, but with his state of mind focused on Satan, Nehemiah replied with a question of his own, 'Who art thou, the Devil?' Lydia was able to persuade Nehemiah that she was not the Devil and told him to go to bed. He obliged, but the temptation to commit suicide by ratsbane had not abated. When he awoke the next morning, the first thing he thought of was to go and 'get this ratsbane'. This would be his tenth suicide attempt. According to Nehemiah, Satan told him 'do not to go to a grocer that knows you for fear they mistrust you and so hinder your purposes, but go to a stranger that knows you not'. Upon Satan's advice, therefore, Nehemiah 'went to a grocer on Leadenhall Street', but did so 'with much fear and trembling and

³² GL MS 204, fol. 5. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 35.

aching of heart'. To make sure the grocer there would have no reason to mistrust him, Nehemiah asked how to use the poison to kill the rats. His deception worked, and when he got home he took a small portion of the ratsbane, 'a small pea' size 'into a spoon' and mixed it with beer. Before he could drink the mixture, though, 'the Lord' blessed him and Nehemiah 'broke the spoon and hurled it away'. He left the room, but took the poison with him. He went to another room, where he swallowed 'a great pins head' portion and more still when he went upstairs to the garret window. He thought the poison would soon make him sick so he went to a bedchamber and lay down on the bed. He tried to sleep, 'thinking never to awake again', but could not because his 'mind was so troubled'. Suddenly, Nehemiah vomited the ratsbane and discovered that other than a bad taste in his mouth and sore stomach, 'like one's stomach when it is overlaid with fat meat'; the poison had caused him 'no hurt' at all.³³

As his condition worsened, Nehemiah began to believe the Devil took the shape of his shoes, and even the minister, Henry Roborough. He recorded in his manuscript that on the 'Sabbath day before Easter' he came home from church and went 'alone into the parlor'. Meanwhile, along with his father and the minister the rest of the household were 'in the hall at dinner'. After he had finished eating, his father then came to check on Nehemiah and asked how he did. With that question, Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that he 'fell out a crying' and 'said the Devil will not let me alone'. His father quickly 'shut the parlor door' and bid Nehemiah to 'hold' his 'peace'. He asked Nehemiah 'what troubled' him. To which Nehemiah replied 'Oh, my sin against my God, which hinders me. I cannot be saved'. He told his father that 'the Devil can come in any likeness; he can come in the likeness of my shoes'

³³ GL MS 204, fols. 5-7. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 35-37.

and flung his shoes away. He then continued by stating that ‘the Devil’ could even ‘come in the likeness of an Angel of light or in the likeness of Master Roborough’, upon which the minister ‘opened the parlor door’ and walked into the room. Nehemiah ran ‘to the other end of the parlor’, in an effort to escape Master Roborough, but the minister continued his pursuit. He moved closer and closer to Nehemiah and finally reached him. By that point, according to his manuscript, Nehemiah had become ‘unruly’ and Master Roborough had to hold his arms. Nehemiah ‘told him he was a devil’, and Roborough responded with the request that ‘I hope you will not say I am a Devil. ‘Yes, that I will’, said Nehemiah. Then, Roborough ‘persuaded’ Nehemiah ‘to go home with him’, and Nehemiah ‘did so’. Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that he ‘went through the street slipped shoe’, and spent the rest of the afternoon with Master Roborough in his ‘study while he did study his sermon’.

Nehemiah’s struggle with visions of Devil was sporadic and unpredictable. Even after a brief period of calm, the visions could suddenly return and cause Nehemiah to withdraw from the company of others. On that same afternoon, after Roborough had persuaded Nehemiah to go home with him, Nehemiah quickly returned to a conviction that the Devil had taken the shape of his shoes. At one point, he even flung his shoes across Roborough’s study. With the same pastoral sensitivity exhibited earlier, the minister picked up the shoes up and gave them back to Nehemiah. He then sought to provide counsel by bidding Nehemiah to read the ‘fifth of the second Corinthians’, which Nehemiah did.³⁴ Roborough’s efforts seemed to pacify Nehemiah, if only for a little. Nehemiah even found the peace of mind to go

³⁴ The subject of 2 Corinthians 5 is twofold. The first ten verses of the chapter discuss the distinction between humanity’s earthly existence in the physical body and the new heavenly existence in heaven. Verses 11 - 21 discuss the role of the Christian minister as a minister of reconciliation between men and God. The writer of the passage hopes that God will make this role of the minister plain to the ‘conscience’ of the individual.

along with Roborough to church. The peace, however, was short-lived. Nehemiah quickly left the church and returned home. When he arrived, the lunch guests from earlier that day were still present, so he decided to go straight to bed. This did not trouble his father, who simply thought Nehemiah was sick. According to his manuscript, though, Nehemiah understood he was ‘not so sick in the body’, as he was in ‘mind’. When everyone finally left the house, his ‘loving and tender Father’ came up to the bedchamber and sat down ‘by the bedside’. He ‘read’ to Nehemiah and ‘prayed unto God’ for him, for he thought Nehemiah ‘would have died that afternoon’. Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript, that his troubles were not caused by bodily health, but his belief that ‘God had forsaken’ him and that he should ‘never be saved’.³⁵

Eventually, Nehemiah experienced what he referred to as a ‘trance’. In ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance’, he wrote that at ‘another time’, just after his tenth temptation, he ‘went to church, thinking to have gone to the sacrament’. After the sermon concluded, he approached his father, who was seated with the choir, and ‘burst out a crying’. He told his father that he ‘could not receive the sacrament’ and quickly left for home. When he arrived at his father’s house, Nehemiah entered his bedchamber and ‘shut the door’ behind him. He then knelt down and ‘poured’ out his ‘soul to God and cried unto him’. He pleaded with God to ‘fit’ him ‘for the next sacrament day’ when suddenly, ‘being then troubled’ in his ‘mind’, he thought ‘verily that the Devil did appear unto’ him in the likeness of a ‘black crow’. According to his manuscript, the crow flew around the bedchamber and said to Nehemiah that he ‘should go no more (to receive the sacrament) and that he could make the tiles of the house fall on me presently and destroy me’. Nehemiah

³⁵ GL MS 204, fols. 7 – 8. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 37.

countered with the statement, ‘do what though canst, Satan; thou canst do no more than my God will let thee, and if thou doest kill me now: thou wilt but send me to heaven the sooner’. He then ‘did walk about the chamber in a trance, talking with the Devil almost an hour’. The conversation concluded abruptly when ‘somebody opened the door’ and Nehemiah went downstairs ‘with them’.³⁶

Other than walking around in his bedchamber and ‘talking with the Devil’, Nehemiah did not clarify in his manuscript what his experience of a ‘trance’ meant. He did not explain whether his experience involved a ‘suspension of consciousness’, or numbing of the senses; ‘a state of extreme apprehension or dread’; or ‘mental abstraction from external things’, such as rapture or ecstasy.³⁷ Nor did his narrative of the incident reveal whether he believed diabolical powers or the Holy Ghost had induced the experience.³⁸

What Nehemiah’s narrative of the trance did reveal was his self-diagnosis as melancholic. It was a diagnosis that Nehemiah had suggested in the previous episode recorded in his manuscript, when the Devil appeared to him on the ‘Sabbath day before Easter’ in 1619. On that day, in addition to his ‘being troubled in mind’ out of the pains caused by his conscience, Nehemiah attributed his vision of Satan to melancholy. According to his earliest extant manuscript, ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance’, melancholy had caused him to proclaim to his father that ‘the Devil can come in any likeness, he can come in the likeness of my shoes’.

³⁶ GL MS 204, fol 8. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 38.

³⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd Ed., 1989), ‘trance’.

³⁸ For interpretations that discussed the differences between diabolical induced trances and trances induced by the Holy Ghost, see William Perkins, *A godly and learned exposition or commentarie upon the first three chapters of Revelation*, (London, 1606), pp. 41 – 42; Thomas Cooper, *The mystery of witch-craft*, (London, 1617), pp. 155 – 157; Thomas Jackson, *Peter’s Tears A Sermon, preached at St. Mary’s Spittle*, (London, 1612), pp. 18 – 25.

Likewise, according to the same manuscript, he wrote that it was a ‘melancholic’ state that caused him to see the Devil in the likeness of a black crow.³⁹

Nehemiah seems to have based his diagnosis of melancholy on at least some knowledge of Galenic theory.⁴⁰ Before his first reference to ‘being then melancholy’ and perceiving the Devil in the ‘likeness of’ his shoes and the figure of Master Roborough ‘on the Sabbath day before Easter 1619’, Nehemiah wrote in his earliest extant manuscript, ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance’, that when he came home from church ‘I went myself alone into the parlor and I would eat no meat’. In an English translation of Galen’s basic theories of physic and recommendations for healthy habits, medicines and home remedies, Galen wrote that, ‘By all means let Melancholy Men avoid excess both in eating and drinking, let them avoid all meats hard of digestion... let them use meats that are light of digestion, and drink often at meat’. According to Galen, ‘excess in either meat or strong liquor’ could not only cause stomach problems, but ‘idle and strange imaginations and fancies’. If one did eat meat or consumed strong liquor, Galen then recommended ‘much Exercise’ as it ‘helpeth digestion, but also, because it distributeth the Vital Spirit throughout the Body, and consumeth those superfluous Vapors by insensible Transpiration, which causeth those idle fancies and imaginations in men’.⁴¹ Mixing ancient Greek philosophy with human physiology, Galenic theory suggested that melancholy was a material substance present in the human body, a byproduct of the four essential elements of earth: cold, moisture, heat, and dryness. To a lesser or

³⁹ GL MS 204, fol. 8. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ The pursuit of Nehemiah’s understanding of melancholy in the following paragraphs goes further than Paul Seaver’s discussion of the topic in *Wallington’s World*, p. 16. Seaver passes over Nehemiah’s self-diagnosis as melancholic as the ‘psychiatric jargon of his time’.

⁴¹ Galen, *Galen’s art of physick... translated into English, and largely commented on: together with convenient medicines for all particular distempers of the parts, a description of the complexions, their conditions, and what diet and exercise is fittest for them*, (London, 1652), pp. 55 -56. While this text is published much later than his temptations, Nehemiah would have received the theories of the ancient Greek philosopher, Galen, via Reformed Protestant ministers who learned it university.

greater degree, all people were believed to possess these substances by birth, but also through the ingestion of food. When an individual ate, he or she delivered one or more of these four elements to the liver. The liver then broke down the elements into the four basic qualities of the human body. These qualities were known as humors. The four humors of the human body were melancholy or black bile, phlegm, blood, and choler, or yellow bile. Humors supplied the heart with the substances it needed to energize body, which also produced the spirit. The soul utilized the spirit to animate the body, including such functions as thought and volition.⁴²

The combination of Nehemiah's religious concerns and his self-diagnosis as melancholic also reflected the fusion of Galenic theory with theology; a fusion epitomized around the time of his temptations in Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).⁴³ According to Burton, the affect of the melancholic humor depended on how that humor 'settled' in the body: to what 'quantity or quality' it reached, and whether it gathered in the 'brain, spleen, Meseriacke veins, heart, womb, and stomach'. It was then a matter of temperature, whether the settled substance was hot or cold. An abundance of melancholy settled in a specific place in the body, heated or cooled to a certain temperature, could produce a myriad of different symptoms or signs of illness. In consideration of these factors, Burton then identified different types of melancholy. One of those types, 'religious melancholy', was particularly reminiscent of Nehemiah's temptation account. According to Burton, religious melancholy was similar to what he referred to as 'love melancholy'. Both

⁴² For a survey of Galenic theory and its influence in early modern England, see Angus Gowland, *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, chapter one. The works of the ancient Greek philosopher, Galen, first appeared in England through the translation efforts of Thomas Linacre. On Linacre, see Vivian Nutton, 'Linacre, Thomas (c.1460–1524)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sept 2004). On Galenism, melancholy and early modern Protestantism, see Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy and Madness in Early Modern England*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), chapter 2; Jean Delumeau, 'L'age d'or de la melancholie', *L'histoire*, 42, (1982), pp. 28 – 37; and, Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress*, pp. 26 – 30.

⁴³ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy what it is. With all kinds, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and several cures of it*, (Oxford, 1621), The First Partition, Sect. 1, Memb. 3, Subs. I, pp. 45-54.

involved an individual's affections or desires. While the object of desire for a person who suffered from love melancholy was often another person, the object of desire in the case of religious melancholy was God. Love melancholy distorted the desire for another person, causing lust and jealousy, while religious melancholy distorted a person's devotion and ethical concern with 'peevishness', 'obstinacy', 'uproars', 'hatred', 'torture of souls', 'blind zeal' and even 'madness'. In the years leading up to his temptations, Wallington often referred to his behavior as 'peevish' and 'quarrelsome' in his manuscripts.⁴⁴ The other symptoms identified by Burton, specifically 'uproars' and 'torture of souls', were also evident in Nehemiah's temptations narrative. The most obvious example of this was Nehemiah's description of the 'horror and terror of conscience' for sin, and the outbursts at lunch on the Sabbath before Easter with his father and Master Roborough.⁴⁵ The similarities between Nehemiah's temptation narrative and Burton's theory of religious melancholy, however, were most evident in the main symptom identified by Burton. According to Burton, an individual who suffered from religious melancholy could experience such deep despair that he or she might lose all 'hope or expectation for amendment'. Despair from religious melancholy could even lead to thoughts of suicide. Quoting Austin (Augustine), Burton wrote that religious melancholy was

A fearful passion, wherein the party oppressed thinks he can get no ease but by death, and is fully resolved to offer violence unto himself; so sensible of his burden, and impatient of his cross, that he hopes by death alone to be freed of calamity... The part affected is the soul, and all the faculties of it, there is a privation of joy, hope, trust, confidence, of present and future good, and in their place succeed, fear, sorrow, etc., as in Symptoms shall be showed: The heart is grieved, the conscience wounded, the mind Eclipsed with black fumes, arising from those perpetual terrors.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Compare FS MS V.a.436, fols. 3 – 4 and 7 with Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, The Third Partition, Sect. 4, Memb. 1, Subsect. 3, p. 742.

⁴⁵ See pp. 161 – 163 of this thesis.

⁴⁶ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, The First Partition, Sect. 2, Subs. 5 – Sect. 3, Memb. 1, Subs. 3, pp. 229 – 254.

For Robert Burton, the despair caused by melancholy was particularly dangerous for the pious individual. In Burton's opinion, the despair brought about by melancholic humors was manifest in the life of an extremely pious person in the pains of a troubled conscience. A troubled conscience from melancholy could produce great fears of condemnation and visions of Satan like those described by Nehemiah. Quoting the doctor Felix Platter, Burton wrote that religious melancholics 'think they are not predestinate, God hath forsaken them; and yet otherwise (these individuals are) very zealous and religious'.⁴⁷ According to Burton, 'tis common to be seen, Melancholy for fear of God's judgments and hellfire, drives men to desperation, fear and sorrow if they be immoderate with it'. This condition was made the worse with much solitariness and private devotion. Burton looked specifically to the example of a minister by the name of Peter Forestus. Through 'precise fasting in Lent, and overmuch meditation' Peter Forestus 'contracted' the 'mischief' produced by religious melancholy. He 'became desperate' and 'thought he saw Devils in his chamber, and that he could not be saved, he smelled nothing as he said, but fire and brimstone, and was already in hell, and would ask them still, if thy did no smell as much'. Burton, presumably one of the 'them' in the room with Forestus, 'told' him that he was 'melancholy', but Forestus 'laughed' and replied, 'that he saw Devils, talked with them in good earnest'. Forestus then spit in Burton's face and asked him if he too did not 'smell brimstone'.⁴⁸

Yet, while Nehemiah's understanding of melancholy, as revealed in his manuscripts, demonstrated similarities with a variety of sources like Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), it was an understanding that probably came from

⁴⁷ Felix Platter (1536 – 1614) was a doctor trained in Montpellier. See John Ruhrah, 'Felix Platter 1536 – 1614: Pediatric Biographies', *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, Vol. 36, No. 5, November 1928, pp. 1037 – 1039.

⁴⁸ Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, The Third Partition, Sect. 4, Subs. 2, Memb. 3, pp. 773 – 775.

listening to sermons preached by Reformed Protestant divines around the time of his temptations.⁴⁹ The previous chapters in this thesis have already noted that after the deaths of his stepsiblings in 1609, Nehemiah made a habit of sermon gadding. He testified in his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books’, that in the ‘seven years’ which followed the deaths of his stepsiblings that he not only attended church on the Sabbath, but ‘often’ ‘on the weekdays’. By the turn of the sixteenth century, some estimate that more than forty London parishes had Reformed Protestant lectureships, which, in combination with weekday sermons, supplied the parishioners with a daily dose of preaching. During the week, a parishioner could hear a sermon on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.⁵⁰

Other than his own minister, Henry Roborough, Nehemiah did not mention by name the preachers he heard around the time of his temptations, but (as noted in the previous chapter of this thesis) one London preacher who took up the pulpit twice on Sunday and every Wednesday morning at that time was William Gouge of Blackfriars.⁵¹ Nehemiah was certainly familiar with the theology of Gouge before his last suicide attempt in 1623. According to his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books’, he purchased a copy of Gouge’s book, *Domesticall Duties* (1622), in 1622. More will be said of this text in the paragraphs below. Nevertheless, from *The whole-armor of God: or A Christian’s spiritual furniture, to keep him safe from all the assaults of Satan* (1619), a text ‘first preached’ and published in the year of Nehemiah’s diagnosis, Nehemiah would have learned that melancholy could caused an individual to incorrectly judge themselves as beyond redemption, or the power of God to forgive sins and overthrow

⁴⁹ On the differences and similarities between Robert Burton and Reformed Protestant divines in regards to the theory of melancholy, see Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul*, pp. 49 – 64.

⁵⁰ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, p. 188.

⁵¹ Brett Usher, ‘Gouge, William (1575–1653)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

the power of Satan through the work of the Holy Spirit. According to Gouge, people who suffered from melancholy often believed they had been ‘rejected of God’ because of ‘sin against the Holy Ghost’, and ‘commonly have in them great grief of heart’. They ‘have a longing to be out of that estate’, which reveals a ‘secret love of God, and zeal of his glory’, but do not ‘feel this love’. For Gouge, it was the experience of fear and the inability to feel love for God that marked the difference between the melancholic individual and the person who had truly sinned against the Holy Ghost. By ‘sin against the Holy Ghost’, Gouge meant those who had intentionally spoken ‘blasphemy’, ‘slander’, or were ‘obstinate’ in their view that Christ was unable to forgive sin. This was a sin against the Holy Ghost because it was through the Holy Ghost that Christ worked in ‘dispossessing the Devil, that made the party whom he possessed both blind and dumb’. According to Gouge, the melancholic person often judged himself or herself as having committed this sin against the Holy Ghost, but this was attributable to ill ‘bodily health’. Melancholy affected the mind and clouded the individual’s ability to judge him or herself correctly. In Gouge’s estimation, therefore, it was best if the individual did not try to evaluate his or her spiritual estate. He or she should leave that evaluation to the ‘censure of the Church’. Gouge suggested that the Church was to minister to the melancholic individual ‘like good physicians and faithful friends’ and to be ‘the more tender over them, and afford them the best help we can, both by wise counsel and fervent prayer’. According to Gouge, if any person who suffered from melancholy sought to judge him or herself, they did so to ‘their own ruin’. From the theology of Gouge represented in his sermon, *The whole-armor God* (1619), then, Nehemiah would have learned that melancholy made the afflicted person incapable of proper self-reflection and dangerously vulnerable to fantasies or delusions. This effect of the

illness was most hazardous when the individual disregarded the help of others and was unable to feel the love of God within. According to Gouge, this put the individual in jeopardy of judging him or her self as beyond God's power to forgive sin and dispel the Devil from the soul.⁵²

Nehemiah also may have gained his understanding of melancholy from religious or theological books. The previous chapters have noted that his father and brother gave him many books, one of which was a copy of John Brinsley's *The true watch, and rule of life* (1615).⁵³ If Nehemiah read *The fourth part of the true watch* (1624), in the section located under the subheading 'The seventh particular Meditation, of the second general: how Satan exerciseth all his power and tyranny against all the Churches spiritually', he would have discovered the details of demonic temptation that resembled his own. In that section, Brinsley wrote that Satan 'exerciseth his power and tyranny against' Christians, 'even spiritually against their selves and conscience, so far as God permits him, as well as their bodies'. According to Brinsley, the Devil could cause the individual 'spiritual miseries', and even tempt the individual to use 'unlawful means for their relief and succor'. The Devil did this, according to Brinsley, 'to wound their weak consciences or get more advantage against them'. A great part of this temptation was to cause the individual 'to doubt the Lord's favor and love, and of the truth of their Religion, the goodness of their cause, the soundness of their Faith and repentance; or whether they have any Faith or no'. The Devil then made 'them possess the very sins of their youth, setting all of them before their faces, which ever they fell into in their whole lives, so much as he is able, and aggravating every least slip or failing, as if it were the most heinous sin, that ever was committed'. All of this, finally, was made the worse 'through melancholy',

⁵² Gouge, *The whole-armor of God*, pp. 382 – 383, pp. 565 – 566.

⁵³ See pp. 61, 125 – 126 of this thesis.

whereby Satan caused ‘them to accuse themselves falsely, and for those things wherein they are most innocent, or for, yea, the best things that ever they have done, and so increase their miseries both bodily and spiritual’. The pains of this experience could cause the individual to ‘cry loud day and night’, either for themselves or out of sympathy for others.⁵⁴

In his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books’, Nehemiah also referred to the published work of the Elizabethan minister, Richard Greenham. Much of Nehemiah’s concern for particular sins committed in the past and present, as well as for a general sinfulness that could affect his future, was analogous to Greenham’s discussion of melancholy, in printed works available to Nehemiah during his temptations.⁵⁵ Greenham’s writing reflected his work as a minister in Cambridgeshire and his eventual position of lecturer at Christ Church Greyfriars, London. After his death 1593, Greenham was remembered for his practical theology and his efforts for ministering to those afflicted with deep sorrow and despair over sin. The eminent clergyman, Thomas Fuller, remarked that his ‘master-piece was in comforting wounded consciences’ and that ‘many, who came to him with weeping eyes, went from him with cheerful souls’.⁵⁶

The early date for many of his publications, suggests that Nehemiah could have read books by Greenham before and during the time of his temptations. However, Nehemiah’s reference to Greenham occurred late. He wrote in his last extant manuscript that in the year 1650, at fifty-two years of age, he found ‘some profitable and comfortable letters’ ‘that did lye by me’. He decided to collect these

⁵⁴ Brinsley, *The fourth part of the true watch*, pp. 50 – 58.

⁵⁵ Richard Greenham, *Short Rules sent by Master Greenham to a Gentlewoman troubled in mind*, (London, 1612); *A most sweet and assured comfort for all those that are afflicted in conscience, or troubled in mind*, (London, 1595).

⁵⁶ Eric Josef Carlson, ‘Greenham, Richard (early 1540s–1594)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

letters in ‘another Book’ that he titled ‘Many pious, holy, Godly and Christian Letters’. This manuscript is no longer extant, but in Nehemiah’s list of the contents, which he recorded in his last extant manuscript, he included a section called *Short Rules sent by Mr. Greenham to a gentlewoman troubled in mind* (1612). Whether this was Nehemiah’s first encounter with the work of Greenham, or if he read more of Greenham’s works around the time of his temptations is not evidenced in the other manuscripts. Considering the date of printing, it was curious that Nehemiah recorded this particular work of Greenham’s in 1650. The entire text was printed on one sheet of paper ‘to be sold at the entering of the Exchange’. In the seventeenth century, the London Exchange was a short walk from the Wallington home in Eastcheap. It seems likely, then, that Nehemiah bought the work himself or either his father or brother purchased this short and probably inexpensive work in 1612 and gave it to him, who kept it, along with the other books they gave him; the expression in his manuscript, that the letters ‘did lye by me’, suggested as much. If this was the case, then Nehemiah could have read the letter around the time of his temptations, and perhaps, given its short length, many times over.⁵⁷

In *Short Rules sent by Master Greenham to a Gentlewoman troubled in mind* (1612), Greenham suggested, much like Gouge and Brinsley, that in times of temptation melancholy often caused people to be confused about their spiritual estate. Greenham wrote that during times of temptation, the individual was to remember most of all that they were ‘always’ ‘in the presence of God and his Christ’, and to ‘frame’ their ‘actions accordingly’. Secret sins were to be feared more than ‘open shame’, but the individual could be ‘sure, that there is mercy with Christ Jesus’. If the person felt grieved over their ‘present estate’, they were to ‘remember the former

⁵⁷ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 180-181.

mercies' they had received. According to Greenham, there was 'a vicissitude of grief and comfort, as of light and darkness'. Any estate was 'the work of God' and the individual should 'beware' not to 'alter' the 'judgment' of their estate; 'as saying, sometimes it is God's work, sometimes melancholy, sometimes your weakness and simplicity, sometimes witchery, sometimes Satan'. A wavering in a person's assessment of his or her condition 'will much trouble' them; they might 'think melancholy to be an occasion, but no cause, and so of the rest'.⁵⁸ Greenham had addressed this theory more fully in a previously published work entitled *A most sweet and assured comfort for all those that are afflicted in conscience* (1595). Here, Greenham wrote that one way to address the confusion caused by melancholy was physic, or medicinal practices. In pursuing this method, he did not suggest that the individual should neglect the soul. According to Greenham, it was a mistake to look for the cause of a person's grief either solely in the conscience or in the body. Yet, while it was important that both methods of inquiry be pursued, all should be done out of a religious or spiritual concern for piety. Often a person 'troubled in conscience' may 'come to a Minister' and 'look all to the soul and nothing all to the body'. In another instance, he may 'cometh to a Physician' and 'considereth' only the body, and 'neglecteth the soul'. 'For my part', Greenham wrote

I would never have the Physician's counsel severed, nor the Ministers labour neglected; because the soul and body dwelling together, it is convenient, that as the soul should be cured by the word, by prayer, and by fasting, by threatening, or by comforting; so the body also should be brought into some temperature, by Physicke, by purging, by diet, by restoring, by music, and by such like means; providing always that it be still done so in the fear of God, and wisdom of his spirit, as we think not by these ordinary means to smother or smoke out our troubles; but as purposing to use them as preparatives, whereby both our souls and bodies may be made more capable of the spiritual means to follow after.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Greenham, *Short Rules sent by Master Greenham to a Gentlewoman troubled in mind*.

⁵⁹ Richard Greenham, *A most sweet and assured comfort for all those that are afflicted in conscience*, p. 53.

Ultimately, it was Greenham's recommendation in *A most sweet and assured comfort* (1595) on how to respond to both a troubled conscience and melancholy through confession that most mirrored Nehemiah's narrative of his temptations. According to Greenham, even if the source of an individual's condition was due to humors in the body such as melancholy, it remained important that the minister 'come in' with 'tender and loving affections', and therewith 'more freely work upon the grieved Conscience; first bringing them to the sight of sin, as to some cause of their trouble'. For Greenham, the person afflicted with the troubles of melancholy was primed for 'confession of some especial, secret and several sin', and the minister should use the opportunity afforded by the malady to lead the individual to confess 'particular' as well as 'general' sins. Greenham based this suggestion on his belief that the turmoil and confusion of melancholy emanated from an individual's 'palpable blindness or disordered discerning of sin'. He wrote that by leading the melancholic person to examine his or her soul, and confess specific as well as a general sinfulness, the minister 'shall see many of these poor souls tossed too and fro, now floating in lows, now plunged in sorrows, not able to distinguish one sin from another'. In other words, according to Greenham, the true source of an individual's trouble was always sin, and the need to confess specific sins committed as well as a 'general' or sinful nature.⁶⁰

The possible influence of Greenham's theory was reflected in Nehemiah's efforts to confess his sin. In 1622, three years after his experience of a trance and self-diagnosis as melancholic, Nehemiah was distraught by the powerful recollection of his childhood sin. In this recollection, he recounted events where he had stolen from

⁶⁰ Greenham, *A most sweet and assured comfort for all those that are afflicted in conscience*, pp. 51-56.

his father, which inspired him to pray and confess his sins. He wrote in his earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance', that he 'went into my chamber and poured out my soul unto the Lord and confessed my sin unto the Lord'. This confession gave only Nehemiah 'little comfort', so he decided to take 'twenty shillings' out of his own cash-box and 'carried it home to my Father'. His father was not 'at home' in Nehemiah's first two attempts to repay the debt, but when he 'went the third time', he found his father 'alone in the shop'. Nehemiah wrote in his manuscript that this made him 'very glad'. He 'confessed' to his father the sin of stealing from him 'a great while ago' and that 'now it hath pleased God to give' him 'some tough of conscience for it'. He then stated that he wanted to repay the money 'fourfold', 'as God's law requireth'. His father was 'loath' to take the money, but did so 'only to ease' Nehemiah's 'mind'. Nehemiah wrote that his father spoke 'very comfortable unto' him and told him that 'he had forgiven' him, which made Nehemiah 'very glad' and provided him with a 'lightness of heart', a 'peace of conscience', and 'joy of the spirit'. He wrote that 'before I had confessed my sin unto God and made restitution to my Father it was a lead in my belly and a great torment to my conscience'.⁶¹

Alas, while helpful, the confession of sins as a response to the effects of melancholy and the pains of conscience only brought peace to Nehemiah's mind in regards to the sins of his past, especially in the context of his relationship with his father. It did not ease the troubles caused by the possibility of sin in his present situation. Nor did it calm the fears brought on by his belief that he would suffer for sins from a sinful nature in the future.

⁶¹ GL MS 204, fol. 10. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 38 – 40.

After his confession Nehemiah now sought to reassert his efforts to confront his struggle with melancholy and engage his circumstances through piety by reading books that directed him to obey the commands of God. In addition to beginning his earliest extant manuscript, ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance’, out of the ‘consideration’ of his temptations, he also started two other manuscripts. In one of those manuscripts, ‘The Widow’s Mite’, Nehemiah wrote down the ‘commands of God’ he found in Scripture and other books like John Dod’s *A plaine and familiar exposition upon the ten commandments* (1605), Edward Elton’s *A plaine and easie exposition of six of the commandments* (1619), and Osmund Lake’s *A probe theologicall: or, The first part of the pastors proof of his learned parishoners faith, wherein is handled, the doctrine of the law for the knowledge of it* (1612).⁶² From his reading of these books, he then added to a growing list of articles to live by and ‘tied’ himself ‘with many penalties’ that he was ‘never able to perform’. The purpose of these articles was to help him in his fight against particular sins such as lust, pride, lying, quarrelsomeness and anger, as well as dullness at worship. More importantly, however, the collection and record of these articles in his manuscript was to assist him in his effort to struggle against present sin in the context of his daily life. He addressed the demands of bachelorhood and the responsibilities of managing his own shop by adding more articles to the list, and again when faced with further changes in his home life in 1621 and 1623.⁶³ A sample of the articles relevant to his attempt at managing his own shop are listed below:

44 That I bear no malice, nor hatred to anyone, nor let the sun go down upon my wrath: and if I do: then to pay a halfpenny.

⁶² John Dod, *A plaine and familiar exposition of the Ten commandments*, (London, 1605); Edward Elton, *A plaine and easie exposition of the six commandments of God*, (London, 1619); Osmund Lake, *A probe theologicall: or, The first part of the pastors proof of his learned parishoners faith*, (London, 1612).

⁶³ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 270.

45 That I speak no bitter words nor call nobody out their name, and if I do then to pay to the poor a farthing.
46 That I wish no hurt to anybody: and if I do then to pay a farthing.
47 That I take not the least pin nor anything else from anyone and if I do: then to restore fourfold and one farthing to the poor.
48 That I put my trust in God more than in riches, wisdom, strength or anything else, and if I do not then to pay the poor half penny.
49 That I stand not Idle at anytime, nor negligent in my calling, and if I do then to pay to the poor a farthing.
50 That I do not counsel the faults of my ware, nor speak words of deceit, nor take more for my ware than it is worth: nor speak many words: and if I do: then to pay a farthing.
51 That I do not grieve at the prosperity of my neighbors and if I do, then to pay to the poor's box a farthing.⁶⁴

The possibility for new sins in the present constantly provided more ammunition for Nehemiah's conscience to torture his mind. This required him to repeatedly adjust his approach to personal piety.

Nehemiah's adjustment of his pious intentions is particularly evident in the year 1621. On the 18th of June in that year, Nehemiah entered into the 'honorable estate of marriage' with Grace Rampaigne. Shortly thereafter, he also hired an apprentice, and moved from his bachelor's residence 'at the corner of Philpot Lane 'to keep shop in Leonards, Eastcheap'. Nehemiah and Grace would live at the residence in St. Leonards for the rest of their lives. It was also the home in which they would welcome their first child in October of the following year. These changes to his life meant that Nehemiah was no longer merely confronted by the troubles of bachelorhood, but the obligations of marriage, the prospects of fatherhood, and the supervision of more employees. In order to meet the demands these changes presented, he decided to amend his pursuit of personal piety. He referred to this decision as a new beginning. He wrote in 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance' that on 'Tuesday morning in the last week of December 1621' that he

⁶⁴ GL MS fol.40. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 47.

‘did purpose to begin a new life’ in the New Year.⁶⁵ Some have seen this reference to ‘a new life’ as incorrectly viewed by Nehemiah as ‘conversion’. However, based on the evidence supplied by his earliest extant manuscript, ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance’, and his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books’, Nehemiah likely viewed this as an adjustment to the effort he initiated the previous year, in 1620.⁶⁶ In other words, just as Nehemiah had read books to help him move out of his father’s house and make the transition to independent adult, the immense changes presented by his marriage to Grace Rampaigne and the opening of a new shop in 1621 demanded that he make alterations to his piety to make a new transition. This suggestion is reinforced by fact that the decision ‘to begin a new life’ in 1621 was made in view of New Year. A year earlier, on 1 January 1620, when Nehemiah faced the transition from dependent youth to independent adult, he added to his list of articles to live by. He would do this again on New Year’s Day 1623 and continue this practice until the end of his life.⁶⁷

The need to adjust his approach to personal piety in order to meet the demands of changes to his present situation often brought Nehemiah to a new sense of failure and a relapse to the same yearning to escape. For example, soon into the start of his new existence in 1622, Nehemiah was forced to make further adjustments in his approach to married life and role as an employer. This quickly brought about the same feelings of despair that characterized his temptations. In his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books’,

⁶⁵ GL MS 204, fol. 1. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 32.

⁶⁶ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, pp. 14 -15. Rather than an adjustment to his piety, Seaver suggests that perhaps Nehemiah misinterpreted or failed to experience ‘conversion’ in his decision ‘to begin a new life’ in December 1621.

⁶⁷ GL MS 204, fol. 401. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 55. On making New Year’s resolutions at the end of his life, see FS MS V.a.436, fols. 534 – 537. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 341 – 342.

Nehemiah wrote that he began to feel ‘desirous to die and yet some times in the fear of death’. In order to cope with these feelings, he purchased books on death like Christopher Sutton’s *Disce mori: learn to die* (1601), printed funeral sermons, and ‘many such like book’.⁶⁸ He also ‘took great delight to buy pictures of death’. He confessed, ‘above all’, that he was in a great hurry to buy an ‘Anatomy of Death and a little black coffin to put it in’. By ‘Anatomy of death’, Nehemiah possibly meant a model skeleton or a skull. This aid to piety was an idea that he could have discovered in a book. In his *Seven helps to heaven* (1614), the controversial Protestant minister, Stephen Jerome, suggested that the ‘nobles of Egypt were wont to banquet beholding the Anatomy of Death’. This was a reference to an image that reminded the Egyptian kings of mortality, which was indicated by Jerome’s comparison of the kings to other examples from history. In addition to the kings, Jerome listed the ancient ‘King Agathocles’, who ‘was wont to drink wine out of a Cruse of earth’, as well as ‘Philip of Macedon’, whose ‘ears were every morning saluted (or greeted with the words) that he was mortal’, and ‘Saint Jerome’, whose ‘thoughts were every hour possessed with that imaginary sound: Arise you dead and come to Judgment’. According to Jerome, these examples from history demonstrated that by ‘thinking of Death, amidst your earthly Honors you should so moderate or mortify all earthly desires and delights, that living holily, dying happily, you shall be rightly Noble in

⁶⁸ See FS MS V.a.436, fols. 182 and 467, for examples of the funeral sermons Nehemiah might have collected at this time in his life. He recorded one example under the subheading, ‘A Worthy Speech of Master Aldridge at the Funeral of Old Father Staminat’. He also wrote that he ‘did read something in Master Ashe’s sermon at the funeral of the Minister of Jesus Christ, Master Gataker’. See also Simeon Ashe, *Gray hairs crowned with grace. A sermon preached at Redriff, Aug. 1, 1654, at the funeral of that reverend, eminently learned and faithful minister of Jesus Christ Mr. Thomas Gataker*, (London, 1654).

life and death, with God and man'.⁶⁹ That Nehemiah's own use of the 'Anatomy of Death' mirrored these examples and, more specifically, the pietistic purpose suggested by Jerome, was indicated by an inscription on Nehemiah's coffin which held the miniature anatomy, reading 'Memento Mori', a Latin saying that when translated meant to remember death. The way in which Nehemiah used the anatomy also resembled the 'kings of Egypt' from Jerome's list, as Nehemiah placed the anatomy and the coffin on a stool beside him at bedtime and near him, at the table, during meals. He did this, according to his manuscript, 'to put me in mind and fit me for death'. It was not until a friend told Nehemiah that such practices were 'superstition' that he did away with the model coffin and anatomy.⁷⁰

His biggest relapse came with his last, or 'eleventh', temptation to flee his circumstances by suicide. Nehemiah wrote in his earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance', that in May 1623 he was 'troubled again'. He thought that he 'had been a reprobate' because he started 'to give over holy duties' in his family such as 'reading and prayer'. This concern caused him to travel alone to 'Walton Fair', where he came to a 'riverside'. Seated on the riverbank, he looked 'upon the grass' and his 'conscience' 'told' him that his 'sins were more in number than the spears of grass upon the earth'. According to his manuscript, this sparked Satan to tempt him 'to leap into the river and drown' himself. Nehemiah 'fell out a weeping' until suddenly, when God, out his 'wonted

⁶⁹ Stephen Jerome, *Seven helps to Heaven Showing 1. How to avoid the curse. 2. How to bear the cross. 3. How to build the conscience. 4. How with Moses to see Canaan. 5. Simeon's dying song, directing to live holily and die happily. 6. Comforts for Christians against distresses in life, and fear death. 7. Fervent prayers, to bear sickness patiently, and die preparedly.* (London, 1614), p. 6. On the life of Stephen Jerome see, Thomas Seccombe, 'Jerome, Stephen (fl. 1604–1650)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁷⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 12 – 13. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 270 – 271. More will be said about Nehemiah's use of the anatomy in the next chapter and what he replaced it with.

mercies', 'put into' his mind 'that his mercies were more in number than my sins and if I have the grace, to repent for them'.⁷¹

Even after this final temptation to commit suicide, Nehemiah continued to make adjustments to his pursuit of piety in an effort to meet the demands of his current situation. In 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance', Nehemiah lamented that at one point, that for 'two years or more' he gave 'over these my Articles, which doth now much grieve my heart and trouble my mind'. He concluded, therefore, to make another fresh start. With the start of another New Year on 'January the 1 day 1629', he resolved to 'take another course' to 'overcome' his 'corrupt nature'. This time he decided to write down his 'sins in a book', 'not to know the number of them: for they were more in number than the sand on the seashore', but to see how much he 'did run in debt in God's book'. He then hoped by 'spreading them before the Lord' that his 'proud heart' might be broken and 'so get an humbled spirit and to see the want of a savior'. This would, Nehemiah believed, provide him with a 'high estimation of my Savior, Jesus Christ and to praise him above all other things whatsoever'. Eight years later, he changed tack again. He would, 'through God's assistance', 'begin again' on 'New Year's Day, 1637', striving once more to 'renew' his life 'in new obedience to his holy will and commandment'.⁷²

Even in light of his repeated failure, Nehemiah continued to confront the challenges presented in his present situation by altering his pietistic approach. He persisted in his study of the Bible and other books like William Gouge's *Domesticall Duties* (1622). Faced with the responsibilities of a new family and employees after failing in his repeated efforts 'to begin a new life' and relapse to thoughts about death, Nehemiah drew out principles and values from Gouge not only for his business

⁷¹ GL MS 204, fol. 9. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 38.

⁷² GL MS 204, fols. 44-45. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 48 – 50.

practice (as has already been shown), but also for ‘everyone’ in his household; that they might ‘learn and know our duties and honor God everyone in his place where God had set them’. He did so, according to his manuscript, because he was ‘resolved with Joshua that I and my house will serve the Lord’. It was from his study of Gouge that he added to the list of ‘77 Articles’ that he began in 1619. From Gouge, he drew out thirty-one additional articles for his ‘family for the Reforming over our lives as followeth’. These articles were based in a theory of pietistic practice that was indicated by Nehemiah’s first article, which read, ‘First, that we pray all together, every morning and evening if convenient or else by ourselves; if not, to pay the poor’s box a penny’.⁷³ They were not to take ‘God’s name in vain’.⁷⁴ Everyone of the house was also to ‘repeat’ what they heard in the sermon every week and ‘read a chapter every day’ from the Bible.⁷⁵ Moral and ethical behavior was also a part of the articles. ‘If any quarrel’ occurred between the members of the house, or if anyone called another person something other than ‘their name’, they were to ‘pay to the poor’s box a farthing’.⁷⁶ If anyone stole or chose to ‘conceal any wares from the shop, used ‘words of deceit’, or took ‘more for the ware than it was work’ then they also had to pay to the poor’s box.⁷⁷ To insure compliance to these rules for the reformation of his house, Nehemiah then had everyone sign the articles: ‘To these laws we all set our hands NW [Nehemiah Wallington], GW (Grace Wallington), James Wells [or Weld], Obadiah Seeley, Theophilus Wood, Susan Pate’.⁷⁸

⁷³ On Gouge’s advice for the pietistic governance of a household, see *Of domesticall duties*, pp. 5 – 6, 13, 260 – 261, 666 – 667. On the recommendation of the prayers among wives and husbands, see pp. 235 – 239, see especially p. 259. On prayers with children, see pp. 500 – 501. On prayers among masters and servants, see p. 667.

⁷⁴ This would fall under Gouge’s recommendation that the head of a house was obligated to ensure that all in the household followed the commands of God’s Law. The law against taking the Lord’s name in vain was based upon Exodus 20:7. See Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, p. 666.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 639.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 447.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁷⁸ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 12 – 14. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 270 – 272.

Later in life, Nehemiah expressed his belief that he found help for his fear of future sins because of his sinful nature, which did not come from calculated adjustments to his piety. He noted that this remedy had come by something that he could ‘sensibly feel’. As he wrote in his last extant manuscript, ‘An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or the Book of all My Writing Books’, a feeling of ‘strength and comfort’ had come over him by the appearance of ‘The Lord Jesus Christ’ unto his soul.⁷⁹ Until that time, however, he would experience, at best, brief periods of solace in regards to the state of his soul, and, at worst, periods of deep despair and dejection. Nehemiah interpreted this ‘daily’ ‘change by turns’ in his relationship with God as not without purpose. He described the inconsistency of his relationship with God as simply the life of ‘God’s children’, the ‘effects of grace’, and the ‘days of faith’. He perceived the experience of ‘unevenness’ as orchestrated by divine ‘intent’, ‘being in some sort for the time put from’ God, that his ‘joy’ ‘may be the greater: when out of the floods of temptation’ he would eventually ‘arrive’ at the ‘love’ of God.⁸⁰

In the end, the determination not to flee his circumstances but to engage his life with the life of others did not so much represent a dramatic change in Nehemiah as it did a recommitment to his pursuit of piety. Similar to the way he described his efforts to reform his life and be better after his stepsiblings’ death in 1609, the narrative of his temptations found in his earliest extant manuscript and the abridged discussion of that narrative in his last extant manuscript expressed a resolve to combat his problems with melancholy, a troubled conscience, and the struggles of everyday life according to his own strength. To put it more succinctly, when tortured by the ‘horror and terror of conscience for sin’, Nehemiah seemed to interpret himself in the midst of a painful and difficult decision: to forgo the possibility of sin for failing in

⁷⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fols. xii – xii. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 265.

⁸⁰ GL MS 204, fol. 266. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 52.

his obligations and responsibilities to others by committing suicide, or to engage his life with the life of others through an ethical framework that he found in his study of the Bible and other books. His decision to engage his life with the life of others by fashioning an existence through piety ultimately resembled the same approach as that which he had embarked upon in 1609: he continued to pursue a change in his life by managing or controlling his sinful desires and behaviors through piety.

If Nehemiah's narrative of his temptations and his confession 'to begin a new life' in December 1621 did reveal a change, it was in his willingness to accept his sinful tendencies, and to hope in the possibility of his future deliverance from sin rather than escape his obligations to others by suicide. Such a change was clearly represented in a curious lyric that appeared in his second extant manuscript, 'A Memorial of God's Judgments'. After several entries that detailed cases of suicide that he either read about or heard from others, Nehemiah inserted a loose piece a paper into his manuscript that contained the following words,

The Husband cries out, oh my loving wife.
The wife cries out, oh save my husband dear.
The Father cries, would I had lost my life,
His children's woes doth touch his heart so near
All things so rueful dreadful do appear.

The Brother bids the Sister quiet adieu.
The Sister cries farewell my loving brother.
The infants loss doth make the mother rue.
The Child cries out, oh where is my careful mother.
All these (alas) stones, lime & timber smother.

The Servant cries, oh I have lost my Master.
The master for his servant doth complain.
The faithful Friend laments his friend's disaster,
Wishing that for his sake himself were slain.
Thus tears gush out one every side amaine.⁸¹

⁸¹ BL MS 1457, fol. 10. David Booy did not include this lyric in *Notebooks of... Wallington*.

Recorded into his manuscript some years after his final suicide attempt (perhaps in the early 1630s), this lyric seems to indicate that Nehemiah had come to view the pain that an individual might suffer as significantly less than the pain he or she might cause others by an act of suicide. It was a realization that did not mean the inner pain caused by his conscience for sin had gone away, or that he no longer experienced a longing to die. In a 'postscript to my loving wife, children and Friends' written several years after his last suicide attempt at the end of his earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or a Thankful Remembrance', Nehemiah admitted that his family continued to be 'fearful' that he might submit to the temptation to end his own life. He expressed deep remorse that he was 'such a burden unto' his friends, and confessed that he had 'many sorrows and am weak and sometimes out of the way' and was 'sometimes fearful of myself'. He lamented 'how long I have groaned under some corruptions, which still doth boil and bubble up'. This consideration of his continued troubles, both inwardly and outwardly, caused him to write, 'therefore is death welcome that puts an end to these days of sin against my good God'.⁸² Right up to the last pages of his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah would continue to reflect on the subject of death and make adjustments to his personal piety out of those reflections. He persisted in his determination to engage his life with the life of others by listening to sermons and reading the works of Reformed Protestant theologians. What practical information he gathered from that activity, he wrote down in his manuscripts, and through that effort tried to fulfill the obligations required of him in society and help others do the same.

Thus, rather than a period of despair, rooted simply in the belief that he had not or could not experience conversion which led him to try and negate his 'self' and

⁸² GL MS 204, fols. 505 – 510. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp.94 – 96.

escape his circumstances by suicide, this chapter has shown that the Puritan theology which Nehemiah pursued and tried to understand also inspired him to face those circumstances. The ‘preaching and written word’ of Puritan ministers that he encountered in the years leading up to and during his temptations did not cause him to withdraw from his life in the world, but were pursued by him out of a concern to live in relationship with others and fulfill his responsibilities in everyday existence. Such a view exposes a more complex narrative for Nehemiah’s suicidal period than previous studies have provided. Rather than a narrative that presents him as an individual isolated from historical conditions and solely influenced by a Puritan psychology of conversion, this chapter has portrayed an individual consumed with the struggle of carnality, of desire and regret, lust and loyalty, anger and sadness; an individual entangled and encumbered not simply by a process as dictated by the rules and dictates of Reformed doctrines, but by an ailment he diagnosed as melancholic; an individual moving through stages of experience that were not merely inward or spiritual, but practical and grounded in his day-to-day social interactions. It is with this new narrative, linked intimately to the circumstances and situations that confronted him everyday, that the subject of this thesis will now turn. The next chapter will examine more closely the change in Nehemiah’s willingness to accept his sinful tendencies, and how he move beyond his temptations to commit suicide by looking to death as a teacher.

Chapter Five

Death as Teacher

While dramatic and perhaps incredibly fascinating, Nehemiah Wallington's record of his temptations to commit suicide takes up only a small portion of his seven extant manuscripts. The detailed narrative of each of his eleven temptations recorded in his earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance', begins on folio one and concludes just eight folios later, on folio nine.¹ Similarly, in his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life', Nehemiah sums up his temptations in only three folios.² This total of twelve folios represents a mere fraction of the more than five hundred folios that make up each of these two manuscripts, and an even smaller measure when compared to the more than three thousand folios that make up Nehemiah's entire extant catalogue.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Nehemiah Wallington's view of death and social engagement beyond the record of his temptations, in material drawn from three of his seven extant manuscripts. This material will provide evidence from different periods in Wallington's life, as all three manuscripts contain passages that date from just after Nehemiah's last temptation to commit suicide as a young man, to just before his death in 1658. For example, this chapter will explore Nehemiah's earliest extant manuscript, 'A Record of God's Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance'. The dates for entries in this manuscript range primarily from the twenty-first year of Nehemiah's life, in 1619, to the early 1630s.³ During this period,

¹ GL MS 204, fols. 1 – 9. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 32 – 38.

² FS MS V.a.436, fols. 6 – 8. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 38.

³ There are passages from later than the 1630s in this manuscript. As stated previously in this thesis, Nehemiah probably left some pages blank or did not fill up an entire page in many of his manuscripts.

Nehemiah left behind his temptations to commit suicide, but also married, opened his own wood turner shop, and witnessed the birth and death of four of his five children. Also part of the examination of this chapter is material from Nehemiah's second extant manuscript entitled, 'A Memorial of God's Judgments upon Sabbath Breakers, Drunkards, and Other Vile livers'. While entries in this manuscript date from as early as 1618, the dates for the majority of the passages range from the early 1630s to the mid-1650s. In the early 1630s, Nehemiah had entered his thirties. By the mid-1650s, he was only a few years away from his own death in 1658. The material covered in this manuscript, therefore, will examine Nehemiah's view of death in the middle to later years of life. The chapter will then end with an investigation of evidence provided in his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life', which was written in 1654, just four years before his death in 1658.

The question that guides the examination of these three manuscripts is this: did Nehemiah Wallington's view of death change after the record of his temptations to commit suicide as a way of escape from the 'horror and terror of conscience' for his sin, and, if so, how, and did that change support his decision to engage his life with the life of others? The argument of this chapter will answer yes to the first part of this question. This chapter will argue that Nehemiah's view of death begins to change shortly after his next to last temptation in 1621. However, how this informed his decision to engage his life with the life of others is very complicated. This chapter will show that a change in Nehemiah's view of death after his temptations involved a long and difficult process that was never static or complete. Evidence will show that he never experienced a sudden conversion or rebirth of his soul that brought a swift and happy conclusion to the mental and emotional anguish he suffered from as result of his struggle with sin. Instead, he commenced upon a lifelong journey through

reading and writing in his effort to study death, either through theological reflection based upon his reading of the Bible and other books or through stories of death that heard about or read in news pamphlets. Rather than merely a preparation for death and the afterlife, Nehemiah chose to learn lessons from his study of death that might benefit those still living in the world.⁴ Death, in this way, served as a teacher for Nehemiah, instructing him on how to engage his life with the life of others rather than viewing death as the ultimate escape. It was a method that emphasized more than simply the need to prepare for death, but the significance of living in the here-and-now in a godly manner for its own sake. It was also a method that he learned from following the example of the Apostle Paul in his New Testament epistles.

The goal of this argument is to understand better how Nehemiah arrived at the perspective reached in the following passage, which he wrote just four years before his death at sixty years of age, in 1658. On 30 December 1654, Nehemiah awoke at four o'clock in the morning. The early rise was not unusual for Nehemiah, but neither was the concern that stirred him and caused him to write in his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life' that he could not get his 'mind settled on one good thought'. The problem that made his mind race, according to his testimony, was that he could not decide what his New Year's resolution would be for the year 1655. As his mind moved from 'one good thought to another', he was nevertheless able to hold himself steady by the thought that God understood his intentions. He wrote in his manuscript, 'the Lord knows all my thoughts and my purposes and Resolutions'. He believed that God 'accepts the will for the deed'. What mattered, therefore, was that whatever his resolutions for the coming year might be they should avoid 'evil' and

⁴ For discussion of the Reformed Protestant emphasis of preparing for death, see Houbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, pp. 60 – 61. Nehemiah's perspective appears to resemble more closely what Eamon Duffy has described as the purpose of *macabre* art among late medieval Catholics. See Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 330 – 335.

promote 'good'. He wished that he 'could do as some doth against this time of the year; they search out all foul corners and sweep out all rubbish out a doors'. He combined this metaphor along with another metaphor to describe his spiritual condition: like a thorough spring-clean of the house or a pair of old shoes that he took off and never 'put on anymore', he longed to cleanse his 'heart' and rid his life of 'sins'. He admitted that, as of late, his examinations of his self were lacking, which caused him to despair, but comforted himself with the meditation that all of his hope 'lies in Jesus Christ'. This meditation led him to pray that God would keep his heart fixed on Christ. He then determined to spend the day 'humbling' his soul in 'fasting and prayer', and at every meal 'to have the Bible laid on the Table' that his 'soul might feed as well as (his) body'. By that evening, his thoughts had turned to endings – the end of that 'day, the week, the month and the year, this book, nay my very life all draws to an end'. The thought of endings, even the end of his own life in death, caused him to want to end 'this old year well and begin the new year better', and by that he meant, 'in holiness of life and conversation'. He had finally found his New Year's resolution: 'God hath given me an heart to resolve to be for him and to walk close with him in holiness of life, but I am jealous of my weak nature and my deceitful heart; therefore I will with God's help out of myself and by faith suck virtue from Jesus Christ to enable me who saith without him I can do nothing'.⁵

Instead of a preoccupation with death, Paul Seaver has argued that Nehemiah's engagement with society after his temptations reflected unresolved issues related to what we might 'define today as late-adolescent identity crisis', or what in the context of early modern Reformed Protestantism would have been considered a

⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 537. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 342 – 343.

failure to experience ‘conversion’.⁶ According to this view, because Nehemiah did not go away for college, or serve as an apprentice in a location other than his childhood home, he was denied the proper setting to experience this common ‘rite of passage’.⁷ At the center of this ‘rite of passage’ was ‘conversion’, which for many young men brought a ‘happy conclusion’ to teenage angst and decadent behavior. The young college student, for example, living away from home for the first time, was schooled in doctrines of ‘unmerited grace’ ‘by one of the great charismatic preachers of the university, after which the reborn soul characteristically dedicated his life to the professional ministry and associated himself with the community of the Puritan saints’. The dual experience of pursuing whatever ‘fleshpots’ the university town had to offer and encountering the ‘Word’ of God in the forceful sermons of godly ministers transformed the ‘doubting schoolboy’ into ‘a dedicated professional preacher’. For those individuals who were not privileged to go away to college, similar transformations usually occurred during the years of apprenticeship. Moving away from home to work as an apprentice ‘seems sometimes to have provided’ the same sort of environment to transition from wanton dilettante to godly citizen.⁸ The implication of this theory is that because Nehemiah failed to emancipate himself from the ‘bosom of his family’ in his late teens and early twenties, his social development was stunted. By never leaving home, he forfeited the opportunity to reconcile any confusion related to who he was and who he could be in society. The end of this sort

⁶ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 15 – 16.

⁷ This interpretation intimates that college and apprenticeship was a ‘liminal’ station in early modern society: moving away from home to attend college or to serve as an apprentice was an in-between stage where the individual underwent the traumatic psychological experience of reordering hierarchical structures and priorities in order to enter the next stage of social existence. The foundational texts for this interpretation are Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 21 – 22, 94 – 100, and Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, (Chicago: Aldine Transaction, 1969), pp. 99 - 100. See also Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 93 – 111.

⁸ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, p. 15. Seaver expands his view of the Puritan psychology of ‘conversion’, which was discussed in the earlier chapters of this thesis.

of social perplexity usually occurred for others through an experience of ‘conversion’, or rebirth of the soul, which in one swift moment or short span of time – the length it would take to obtain a college degree or complete an apprenticeship – changed the wayward teenage boy into upstanding professional. By missing the opportunity to experience such ‘conversion’ in his own life, then, Nehemiah entered adulthood unsure of his place in the world.

The effect of Nehemiah’s late-adolescent crisis of identity or failed ‘conversion’, Seaver contends, was most evident in the way he engaged his life at work: the lack of preparedness to face the demands for profit in sustaining his own wood-turner’s shop, combined with insecurities related to his understanding of the Christian life, caused Nehemiah to view this role in society as an endless and unrelenting conflict. In other words, engaging his life with society in the workplace presented Nehemiah with a ‘constant moral battle’ wherein he never found peace. Nehemiah simply could not manage the idea of obtaining or pursuing personal fulfillment in his employment, while at the same time adhering to the Biblical maxim that he should conform his ‘life to the Gospel, to be active in the world but not of it’.⁹ Such a premise suggests, therefore, that Nehemiah’s engagement with society, after his temptations, reflected deep division and antipathy toward the outside world due to an insufficient grasp of Christian conversion, which primarily impacted his ability to achieve success in commerce.¹⁰

⁹ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, pp. 112 & 145.

¹⁰ This trajectory appears to point to Max Weber’s well-known thesis in Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Peter Baehr and Gordon Wells, trans., (London: Penguin Books, 2002), pp. 9 – 16, 32 -34, 56 - 58, and 102 - 103. According to Weber, Protestantism emphasized the significance of labor as a sacred calling. Success in business signified God’s blessing of an individual’s devotion to his particular vocation and the grasp and acceptance of certain doctrines that taught this perspective. At the center of these doctrines, according to Weber, was the Calvinist doctrine of salvation. Weber interpreted the certainty of salvation offered in Calvinist theology as providing self-confidence, a necessary attribute in order to attain prosperity in a marketplace dependent upon the individual’s self-assertion. See also John Coffey, ‘Puritan Legacies’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, eds., pp. 327 – 328.

In regards to the idea of ‘conversion’ in Nehemiah’s late-adolescent years, the previous chapter of this thesis has already noted that his decision ‘to begin a new life’ in December 1621 - just six months after his next to last temptation - did not express his belief that he had experienced a spiritual rebirth. Nor was it an expression reflective of a mistake on the part of Nehemiah - that he simply misinterpreted the survival of his penultimate temptation as ‘conversion’.¹¹ Throughout his life, round the time of New Years, Nehemiah used the language of starting over or beginning again to communicate his resolve to make changes in his efforts at personal piety.¹² The decision ‘to begin a new life’ in 1621 certainly reflected Nehemiah’s determination to meet the challenges presented by his late-adolescent years. It was a decision, however, made out of more than just a desire to succeed at work and acquiring material possessions.¹³ By December 1621, Nehemiah was faced with challenges from his new role as a husband, an employer, and potential father. Six months earlier, he had married Grace Rampaigne. He had also acquired a new apprentice and relocated his shop. In October of the next year, his first child was born.¹⁴ More than all of this, though, the decision ‘to begin a new life’ in 1621 reflected Nehemiah’s determination to understand better and cope with his feelings about death. By December 1621, only six months into his marriage and still settling into his new shop, Nehemiah believed that he had already failed to meet the challenges of his early adult life in a godly manner. This sense of failure caused him to revert to thoughts and feelings of suicide. In reflection upon this time several years

¹¹ In his comments about Nehemiah’s use of the words ‘to begin a new life’, Paul Seaver writes, ‘What seems to have prompted his decision to begin a new life with the new year was his recognition that he had just survived a major crisis with body and soul intact’. See Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, p. 15.

¹² Nehemiah’s decision ‘to begin a new life’ is discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis on pp. 202 – 204.

¹³ John Coffey echoes this interpretation in ‘Puritan Legacies’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, p. 329. In contrast to the Weber thesis in so far as it concerns Wallington, Coffey writes that Nehemiah’s ‘passion for spiritual things’ did not translate into a narrow pursuit of ‘assurance in material success’.

¹⁴ These events are discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis on pp. 182 – 184.

later, he wrote in his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of Life', that he felt 'desirous to die' and was sometimes in the 'fear of death'. It was a feeling that continued for at least two more years until May 1623, when, for the last time, Nehemiah confessed in his manuscript that Satan tempted him to commit suicide by leaping into the river and drown himself.¹⁵

At the very least, Nehemiah understood conversion and/or spiritual rebirth differently than the above theory suggests. Perhaps his understanding of these topics reflected a similar perspective to that found in the writings of other seventeenth century Reformed Protestants. For example, the Towcester-born and future co-founder of Harvard College, Thomas Shepard, did not consider conversion a one-off event, but a 'point of departure for a life of devotional practice and spiritual progress'.¹⁶ Shepard wrote of a 'first conversion', which was often followed by what others have referred to as 'renewed' or 'fresh conversions'. The experience of these subsequent conversions, according to Shepard, frequently followed the pattern of the 'first conversion', whereupon hearing the Gospel an individual repented, converted, and received a new infusion of grace. A person's 'first conversion', therefore, merely initiated a process rather than completing a once-and-for-all transformation.

Conversion and/ or the rebirth of the soul was a repeatable event, whereby the individual received spiritual strength to carry on with life in the world.¹⁷ Shepard himself made the implications of this theology clear. Writing in his journal on 6 January 1641, Shepard confessed in tones reminiscent of Nehemiah that 'I saw I could have no grace at death that I should go to Christ unless I did intend to do

¹⁵ These events are discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis on p. 182.

¹⁶ Hamrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety*, p. 199 - 200. See also Michael Jinkins, 'Shepard, Thomas (1605–1649)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, (London, 1660), I, pp. 128, 78 – 80, 157,; II, p. 167. Shepard, 'The Journal', in *God's Plot*, Michael McGiffert, ed., (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), pp. 87 – 88, 123, 167.

Christ's work while I lived. Hereupon I considered, If I love him my soul will seek him. So I considered that I must keep alive my love to him in my heart for this end'.¹⁸ As this passage indicated, for Shepard, a person's spiritual condition was based on a continual striving on the part of both God and man; an unfolding struggle that was reflected in daily interactions with the world. If he continued in this struggle, Shepard believed that he would experience God's grace 'at death' – meaning, the death of his body.

The truth is, Nehemiah never pointed to an experience from his life in his seven extant manuscripts that he identified as 'conversion'. This does not mean that he never experienced conversion. What it does mean is that, at least according to the evidence provided in his extant writings, he did not consider a particular moment in his life as indicative of a sudden transformation of his soul. In reflecting back over all of his manuscripts later in his life, Nehemiah simply acknowledged both his use of 'means' to come out of his 'corrupt nature and sinful condition', as well as his fault in trying to move beyond this state by the sheer power of his will. In regards to the latter, he confessed that some of his writings 'show me my great Error in looking too much on myself, promising, vowing and Resolving to reform and yet without Christ could do nothing'. The awareness of this error caused him to admit that he could see much of his 'weakness', because, in his words, 'he did not out of self and act in Christ'.¹⁹ In order to understand, therefore, how Nehemiah moved beyond his temptations, it seems ill conceived to speculate on whether or not those experiences reflected his interpretation (or misinterpretation) of conversion. A more fruitful approach, based on the evidence supplied in his manuscripts, would appear to demand an examination of

¹⁸ Shepard, 'The Journal', p. 84.

¹⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 206. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 300.

how he tried to overcome his view of death as an escape from the ‘horror and terror of conscience’ for sin in some other way.

Ultimately, rather than ‘conversion’, the morbid thoughts and feelings that Nehemiah experienced in late adolescence inspired him to commence upon a search for pietistic ‘means’ to overcome those thoughts and feelings through the study of death. At first, in 1621, this study involved meditating on graphic or representational depictions of death. He reported in his last extant manuscript that after his marriage to Grace Rampaighe he bought not only ‘pictures of death’, but also an ‘Anatomy of Death and a little black coffin to put it in’. He testified that his purpose in using these images of death was ‘to put me in mind and fit me for death’.²⁰ It was not until ‘an honest man’ told him (sometime in 1621) that such practices were ‘superstition’ that Nehemiah discarded the use of images of death. In 1622, his next course of action involved reading the Bible and Gouge’s *Of domesticall duties* (1622). He recalled in his last extant manuscript that ‘with my family increasing and now having a wife, a child, a manservant and maidservant: and thus having the charge of so many souls’ that he decided to read Gouge’s book in an effort to apply its lessons to the management of his household. He wrote that his hope in doing so was that ‘everyone of us may learn and know our Duties and honor God every one in his place where God had set them; for I was resolved with Joshua that I and my house will serve the Lord’. It was from his study of Gouge and the Bible that he then recorded ‘77 Articles’, or rules for himself and his family to live by.²¹ The turn to Gouge and the Bible for ‘articles’ to live by did not mark the end to Nehemiah’s study of death. Between 1622 and 1632, Nehemiah and his wife, Grace, experienced the birth of all five of their children. They also witnessed the death of four of those children.

²⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 12 – 13. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 270 – 271.

²¹ This activity was discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis.

Evidence from his first extant manuscript indicates that Nehemiah found it very difficult to cope with these deaths. With the first death his first child, Nehemiah wrote that for a time he became mentally ‘distracted’ and abandoned all ‘purposes, promises, and covenants with my God’.²² In 1625 and 1626, he also witnessed the devastating effects of the plague in London.²³ Perhaps it was from these experiences that death remained at the forefront of his pietistic pursuits.

In 1634, more than nine years after the record of his last temptation, Nehemiah’s study of death continued with a focus on the Bible, which directed him to imagine death in vivid verbal images as a power outside of his body that could enact God’s judgment for sin.²⁴ For example, shortly after the record of his temptations in his earliest extant manuscript, ‘A Record of God’s Mercies, or A Thankful Remembrance’, Nehemiah copied out passages from the book of Proverbs to help him cope with such sins as lust and infidelity. He wrote that ‘the sin of lust hath been in me ever since I was but eight years old and hath continued with me ever since’. He confessed that he had often prayed ‘with tears to God’ to combat the temptation of lust, but added that a second means he used to ‘overcome this sin’ was ‘reading and meditating on those places of holy Scripture that speak against whoredom as Proverbs 2:16, 18-19’. He then copied into his manuscript Proverbs 2:16 and 18, which warned

²² GL MS 204, fols. 408 – 409. Booy, *Notebooks of...Wallington*, pp. 58 – 59.

²³ GL MS 204, fols. 378 – 380, 407 – 408. Booy, *Notebooks of...Wallington*, pp. 52 – 55, 57 – 58.

²⁴ The use of verbal imagery as an aid to pietistic reflection was a disputed practice between Reformed Protestants in seventeenth century England. Influenced, however, by the writings of John Calvin, William Perkins, and William Ames, Reformed Protestants were encouraged to reflect on mental images in order to discover correct doctrine and apply the teachings of Scripture. See William Dyrness, *Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 144 – 145, 170 – 186, and Wulfert De Greef, ‘Calvin as commentator on the Psalms’, in *Calvin and the Bible*, Donald McKim ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 97. See also William Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke: or, A declaration showing how near we may come to the present Church of Rome in sundry points of religion*, (London, 1598), pp. 173, 185 – 186. In the fifteenth century, the priest and macabre poet Pierre Michault envisioned Death as an embodied power outside of the human body saying to would be victims ‘I am commissioned to this by God’. The personification of Death as a power outside of the body that could inflict divine judgment was also represented graphically in Jan van Eyck’s fifteenth century painting, *The Last Judgment*. See Philippe Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, Helen Weaver, trans., (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1981), p. 108.

him that ‘if thou hark to wisdom, it shall deliver thee from the strange woman which flattereth with her words’, because ‘surely her house tendeth to death’. Next, he copied Proverbs 5:3 – 5, which told him that ‘the lips of a strange woman drop are as a honey comb, but the end of her is bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a two-edged sword: her feet go down to death and her steps take hold of hell’. He also transcribed Proverbs 7:25 – 26, as well as Proverbs 22:14, 23:2 and 27. Proverbs 7:25-26 alerted Nehemiah to the idea that the allurements of a woman could even wound or kill, ‘strong men are slain by her’, but the result of this violent metaphorical end, according to Proverbs 22:14, 23:2 and 27, was a ‘deep pit’ or ‘ditch’, i.e. ‘the grave’, which led to a place where death dwelled, ‘the chamber of death’.²⁵ These verbal images that Nehemiah encountered in his reading of Proverbs not only figured death as a beautiful or seductive woman, but also as a power external to his body that dwelled beyond the grave, in a ‘chamber’.²⁶

From his Bible reading in 1634, Nehemiah also learned that death was a force within his body that could enact God’s judgment in a justifiable act of suicide. This lesson was expressed by Nehemiah in his manuscripts as more than merely a spiritual insight or meditative reflection. His interpretation of Proverbs 23:2 led him to understand the power of the death as something that was literally in his body. The verse read in his manuscript, ‘Put the knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to thy appetite’. Nehemiah read the word ‘appetite’ as a reference to his desire for specific nutritious substances. He wrote in his manuscript that in addition to prayer and his Bible reading he began to pay attention to his diet by ‘abstaining from divers meats as eggs and oysters and wine and many other things which I loved very well’. The

²⁵ GL MS 204, fol. 16. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 42.

²⁶ The verbal imagery presented in these verses offers something that had already been presented in the representational depictions of death in the macabre arts of the Middle Ages. Death as a woman and a power that dwelled in a certain place beyond the grave was figured graphically in the fourteenth century Campo Santo fresco, *The Triumph of Death*. See Aries, *The Hour of Our Death*, p. 108.

significance of this interpretation even bore repeating for Nehemiah. In just a few later passages later, he wrote that he tried to observe ‘temperance in meat, drink, and pleasure’.²⁷ Nehemiah’s concern for what he ate made sense when set against the backdrop of his temptations. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, during his temptations, Nehemiah attempted to restrict his diet in order to stave off the onset of melancholy. He did so out of the belief that melancholy could not only lead him to attempt suicide, but also cause him to have strange visions of Satan.²⁸ Proverbs 23:2 then not only reiterated what he believed during his temptations about diet and temptation, but also took that belief one-step further. If he could not abstain from indulging his craving for particular victuals, which only strengthened the power of death in his body, then he would eventually be overcome by God’s judgment in an act of self-murder.²⁹

Bringing harm to his body at this point in his manuscript, though, or even suicide, was not an option for Nehemiah. While his reading of the Bible (Prov. 23:2) possibly reminded him of his bouts with melancholy and his temptations to commit suicide, Nehemiah wrote that the thought of putting a ‘knife to his throat’ was a sin that ‘cost’ him ‘more tears than any sin else’. He confessed that ‘I have often prayed to God to put an end to these days of sin’, but did not proceed in attempting to slit his throat for fear of offending God.³⁰ Instead of a passage, therefore, that detailed another temptation to commit self-harm, what one finds is the beginning of a different course.

²⁷ GL MS 204, fol. 17. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 43.

²⁸ This was discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis on pp. 166 – 169.

²⁹ The view that God could give the Devil the power to cause an individual to commit suicide was also mentioned in printed books, which Nehemiah could have read (see p. 246 n. 68 of this thesis). One popular book was Thomas Beard’s *The theatre of God’s judgments*. This theory appears in Beard’s book in the 1631 and 1642 editions. For example, see Beard, *The theatre of God’s judgments*, (London, 1642), pp. 215 – 217. Michael MacDonald has noted the other books where this theory appears in *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in Early Modern England*, p. 33.

³⁰ GL MS 204, fol. 17. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 43.

Eschewing thoughts of doing violence to his body or even suicide, Nehemiah now asked through the words of Romans 7:24, which he copied into his manuscript, ‘O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’³¹ Nehemiah did not answer this question. Nor did he refer to the response offered by the author of Romans in verses 7:25. In Romans 7:25, the author of Romans replied to the question posed in v. 24 with the statement, ‘I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord’. Rather than supplying this answer, the significance of the question posed in Romans 7:24, therefore, appears to have been the question itself. What about this question could have helped Nehemiah move beyond his temptations? What could the question have meant for him in his struggle with thoughts and feelings about death?

The version of the Bible that Nehemiah appears to have copied the question of Romans 7:24 from was the Geneva Bible. This was perhaps the Bible that he purchased around the time that he started his first extant manuscript. As discussed earlier in this thesis, Nehemiah confessed to buying the ‘great Bible with the notes’ in 1618. He also confessed that he understood very little of what he read in this version of the Scripture.³² This comment possibly reflected his struggle to understand the Bible itself, or that he was confused by the technical commentary that was famously provided in the margins. Nevertheless, despite his feelings of inadequacy in comprehending what he read, Nehemiah testified that he ‘read a chapter every night’ after his father ‘and all the family was gone to bed asleep’. Perhaps it was the marginal note for Romans 7:24 in The Geneva Bible that contributed to Nehemiah’s understanding of death as a force that was literally within his physical body. The marginal note for Romans 7:24 in The Geneva Bible interpreted the phrase ‘body of

³¹ GL MS 204, fol. 17. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 43.

³² See p. 69 of this thesis.

this death’ as ‘this fleshly lump of sin and death’.³³ If so, then Nehemiah could have picked up (if only intuitively) John Calvin’s teaching on the power of sin and death in the body. In his commentary on Romans, Calvin wrote that

By the body of death he means the whole mass of sin, or those ingredients of which the whole man is composed... for Paul meant to teach us, that the eyes of God’s children are opened, so that through the law of God they wisely discern the corruption of their nature and the death which from it proceeds... the word body means the same as the external man and members... For though he still excels brute beasts, yet his true excellency has departed from him, and what remains in him is full of numberless corruptions so that his soul, being degenerated, may be justly said to have passed into a body.³⁴

The Geneva Bible, though, and even its marginal notes, does not provide a hint as to what the question of Romans 7:24 may have meant to Nehemiah, nor how it may have helped him move beyond the temptation to commit suicide. If anything, the question alone, copied from ‘the great Bible’, could have suggested that suicide was indeed an appropriate course of action. Logically speaking, if the body was simply a ‘mass of sin’ that led to death, then the sooner one got rid of it the better.

Another possible source, or at least an inspiration that may have directed Nehemiah to the question of Romans 7:24, was *The historie of the damnable life, and deserved death of doctor John Faustus (1608)*. Nehemiah’s last extant manuscripts evidences that this book became a significant influence for Nehemiah in the year 1634. He wrote in that extant manuscript that in the years 1634 and 1635 that ‘these two books I kept in my pockets to read in, which is the History of Doctor Faustus and of Francis Spira, which did by God’s blessing somewhat ease and refresh my distempered mind’.³⁵ At the height of his regret for dealing with the Devil, the infamous Dr. Faustus was reported in the book to have exclaimed ‘whom is there now

³³ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 6. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 267 – 268.

³⁴ John Calvin, *A Commentary upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans, written in Latin by M. John Calvin, and newly translated into English by Christopher Rosdell, preacher*, (London, 1583), pp. 91 – 92.

³⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 45. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 274 – 275.

that can deliver me?’³⁶ The question came after Faustus had turned his back on God and pledged his allegiance to Satan in exchange for the pleasures and esteem of the world. It was highly probable that Nehemiah had read Faustus much closer to the period of his temptations and during his efforts to move beyond them. Not only would the book have been available for him to buy as early as 1608, but also the similarities in the book’s description of the doctor’s encounters with the Devil, and the language used to portray those encounters, resembled Nehemiah’s narrative of his own temptations. In Faustus and Nehemiah’s narrative, the doctor and Nehemiah are both depicted as having conversations with the Devil, or ‘parleying’ with Satan.³⁷ In both accounts, the Devil is also blamed for causing despair over sin. The difference between the story of Faustus and Nehemiah’s narrative of his temptations is the role of the Devil in prompting Faustus to commit suicide. By the end of the book, Faustus is found dead, his ‘brains cleaving to the walls’ of his room and his ‘inguts bashed all in pieces’. The reader, though, is simply told that the Devil had ‘beaten’ Faustus ‘from one wall against another’.³⁸ One could speculate that Nehemiah was not only influenced by his reading of *The historie of the damnable life, and deserved death of doctor John Faustus* (1608), but also by the version Faustus popularized by the sixteenth century playwright, Christopher Marlowe (if only through hearsay and folklore). Marlowe’s version departed from the former, in Act 2, Scene 2, when Faustus’ dealings with the Devil drive him to the point of suicidal despair over the

³⁶ *The historie of the damnable life... of doctor John Faustus*, Chap. 60.

³⁷ Compare *The historie of the damnable life... of doctor John Faustus*, Chap. 4 with Nehemiah’s warning to ‘take heed of solitariness and of parleying with the Devil’ in GL MS 204, fol. 3. See also Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 34.

³⁸ *The historie of the damnable life... of doctor John Faustus*, Chap. 63.

thought that he was beyond redemption. However, that Nehemiah read Marlowe's version is highly unlikely, and no evidence in his manuscripts suggests otherwise.³⁹

The most probable source for Nehemiah's understanding of Romans 7:24 in 1634 was Edward Elton's *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner Answered: Or, An Explanation of the seventh Chapter of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans* (1618).

Nehemiah wrote that 'in these two years, 1634 and 1635 [the same time he kept copies of Spira and Faustus in his pockets], I did find such hellish filth in my polluted heart with such inclination to sin that although I caused every Lord's day and at other times as occasion served to read in that sweet book of Master Elton's on Romans the VII, which is full of cordial comforts to poor souls: yet I could take but little or no comfort therein'.⁴⁰ It was possible that Nehemiah purchased Elton's book long before 1634. *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner* was first published around the same time that Nehemiah purchased his 'great Bible with the notes' and began writing his first extant manuscript. It would go through two more editions in 1622 and 1653.

Nehemiah's own copy could have been either the 1618 or 1622 edition. A clue as to when he may have bought the book could be his purchase of another book written by Elton. In his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah testified that just after the height of his temptations in 1620, 'being in horror and terror of my mind with sin' he decided to 'live in a most holy and strict life'. In order to accomplish this goal, he attempted to 'gather places of holy scripture, which were commands of God', and wrote these places down in a manuscript entitled *The Widow's Mite*. This approach, he admitted later, led him into 'bondage of the law for some years', as he drew out several 'Articles' to live by and tied himself 'with many penalties' that he was 'never able to

³⁹ On the difference between Marlowe and the English Faust Book, see Lily B. Campbell, 'Doctor Faustus: A Case of Conscience', in *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, vol. 67, No. 2, (March 1952), pp. 219 – 239.

⁴⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 45. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 274.

perform. He surmised that his intentions ‘to keep the law of God’ in this way was because he was ‘so simple and ignorant’. He compared himself to being ‘like a beast’ for thinking he could do so, and as a help to his ignorance purchased Elton’s *A plaine and easie exposition of sixe of the commandements of God* (1619), along with John Dod’s book *A treatise or exposition upon the ten commandments* (1605), and Osmund Lakes’ *A probe theologicall: or, The first part of the Christian pastor’s proof of his learned parishioner’s faith; Wherein is handled, the doctrine of the law for the knowledge of it, with such profitable questions, as aptly fall in at every branch of the law* (1612). Nehemiah’s extant manuscripts do not evidence whether or not he felt these books on the law helped him ‘to walk in the ways of God’ as he desired. Guessing by his later reflection on the period as a time of ‘bondage to the law’ and failed attempts to perform the Articles he drew out from his study, probably not.⁴¹ If Nehemiah had felt disappointed with his first encounter with Elton’s writing in *A plaine and easie exposition of sixe of the commandments* (1619), it seems unlikely that he would have purchased another book by Elton several years later. This, along with the 1618 and 1619 publication dates, suggests that Nehemiah could have purchased the two books around the same time, possibly even together. Therefore, he could have read *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner* (1618) before, during, and even after his temptations to commit self-murder. Elton’s book, in fact, could even have been a pivotal text for Nehemiah as he tried to overcome his temptations between December 1621 and May 1623.⁴²

⁴¹ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 11. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 269 – 270.

⁴² The high probability that Elton’s book made a significant impact upon Nehemiah is also suggested by the fact that he seems to have borrowed the title for one of his own manuscripts. He wrote in his last extant manuscript that in the year 1636 he started writing another book, which he entitled ‘The Complaints of a Sinner Admiring at the Great Mercies of God’. FS MS V.a.436, fol. 47. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 276.

The possible significance of Elton's *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner* (1618) in Nehemiah's efforts to overcome his temptations suggests that a closer look at how it may have helped him is appropriate. The book as a whole would not have been an easy read. The chapter dedicated to v. 24 alone is comprised of twenty-six pages, packed full with dense theological exposition. The length and complexity of the book was even something Nehemiah himself seemed to acknowledge. When he mentioned reading the text in 1634 and 1635, Wallington wrote that he intended to only read it 'on the Lord's day and at other times as occasion served'. In other words, this was not a book like Francis Spira or Dr. Faustus that Nehemiah could have put in his pockets and casually perused during lull moments at work. Elton's book would have demanded more time and focus. The density of the material was perhaps the reason Nehemiah confessed that he derived 'little or no comfort from it'. Yet, despite this remark, there were sections in the book that offered help for someone like Nehemiah, who struggled to understand and overcome the pains of an internal conflict caused by a guilty conscience for sin.

First of all, Elton's recommendation of the Apostle Paul as a pietistic example in his interpretation of v. 24 would have helped Nehemiah judge himself more accurately. During his temptations, Nehemiah expressed a view of himself as one who was beyond hope, an incorrigible and irredeemable mess who could never stop sinning. Indeed, Nehemiah noted in his narrative of the temptations that this was part of Satan's ploy in coaxing him to commit suicide. He wrote in his earliest extant manuscript that 'Satan told me my sins were many and great and that God had forsaken me'.⁴³ Part of the enticement of suicide, therefore, was that Nehemiah viewed himself as uniquely corrupted, a lost cause, or as he would later put it, an

⁴³ GL MS 204, fol. 2. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 33.

individual who would simply one day be ‘overcome’ by the sinful ‘inclinations’ of his heart.⁴⁴ Suicide, in other words, was simply a way out for Nehemiah, a way of escape from a battle that he believed he could never win. The dangers of this harsh self-judgment was to commit the unpardonable sin – that is to doubt the power of God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, as able to reform an individual and make them capable of bearing good, spiritual fruit. Other writers and preachers had warned of such despairing thoughts. Of those writers/preachers whom Nehemiah was familiar was the London minister at Blackfriars, William Gouge.⁴⁵ Gouge had preached in a sermon that was later published that it was a common mistake for individuals that suffered from temptation to judge themselves beyond redemption and ‘thereupon neither pray for themselves, nor suffer others pray for them’. Such individuals, however, in Gouge’s opinion, were ‘more unfit to judge of their spiritual estate, then a man deeply possessed of melancholy, of his bodily health’.⁴⁶ Nehemiah gave no indication in his manuscript that he believed he had committed the unpardonable sin. He had, nonetheless, confessed his struggle with melancholy. His ability to judge his spiritual condition accurately then, based at least upon Gouge’s opinion, was severely diminished. Elton’s book would have brought clarity to Nehemiah’s self-understanding. Through Elton’s exposition of Romans 7:24, Nehemiah would have learned through the example of the Apostle Paul that to struggle with sin was in fact common and appropriate for a child of God. According to Elton, this was a consequence of being what Paul referred to (or what was translated into English) as ‘wretched’. Elton wrote that the word ‘here rendered (wretched, or miserable) doth not signify one in a cursed case and condition, as being out of the favor of God, being

⁴⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 7. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 268.

⁴⁵ Not only had Nehemiah purchased Gouge’s *Of domesticall duties* in 1622, but also he could have heard Gouge preach or lecture at Blackfriars, which was only a short walk from his home. The influence of Gouge on Wallington is discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis.

⁴⁶ Gouge, *The whole-armor of God*, pp. 382 – 383.

here applied to the Apostle; but it signifies one tired and wearied with continual conflicts and striving with sin, as it were a Champion that hath a long time sought and stood out against his enemies.’ The point, for Elton, was that the Apostle, a hero in the Christian faith, had self-designated himself as ‘wretched’. Yet, this was not a blot on the Apostle’s image, but rather a model of someone who struggled vigorously against the ‘remainder of sin that was in him’. It was indeed appropriate in Elton’s view that the Apostle and those now engaged in the same fight recognized not only ‘the greatness of the combat’, but also their inability to ‘wind’ themselves free from the situation. The inability to escape the situation based upon their own effort was due to the fact that they were fighting against something that abided in and was inseparable from their body.⁴⁷

Also helpful for Nehemiah would have been Elton’s interpretation of Paul’s deployment of the phrase ‘body of this death’ in v. 24, which was a reference to what Paul perceived as the origin for his trouble with sin. According to Elton, others interpreted this phrase as referring to ‘this mortal body subject to death’, or the entire human flesh. This interpretation, however, in Elton’s exposition, would mean that the ‘Apostle desired to be delivered from his conflicts with sin, by his bodily death’.⁴⁸ Such a reading, in other words, would justify suicide in order to escape the struggle with sin. As indicated in the previous chapter as well as earlier in this chapter, this was exactly how Nehemiah viewed his struggle with the power of death.⁴⁹ Largely due to his self-diagnosis of melancholy, but also from his reading of the Bible, Nehemiah interpreted death as a force within the very members of his flesh, which he believed was strengthened by his appetite for certain foods. From his reading of

⁴⁷ Edward Elton, *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner Answered: Or, An Explanation of the seventh Chapter of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*, (London, 1622), pp. 458 – 459.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 458 – 459.

⁴⁹ See pp. 208 – 209 of this thesis.

Proverbs 23:2, Nehemiah even went so far as to assert that if he could not curb his appetite for such ‘divers’ things ‘as eggs and oysters and wine and many other things which I loved very well’ then an act of suicide would be justified.⁵⁰ In contrast to this interpretation, Elton wrote ‘but (as I take it) that is not (the Apostles) purpose and meaning: but rather by the word Body, we are to understand the mass and lump of sin, still in part abiding in the Apostle, whereof he complained’. Elton continued by explaining that it was common in Scripture to identify ‘the whole mass or lump of sin’ by giving it the name ‘body’. Elton, for instance, directed his reader to consider Romans 6:6: ‘That the body of sin might be destroyed’. Elton interpreted this verse (and ‘many others’ like it) to mean that the ‘body’ of sin present within them was like a ‘relic of their natural corruption’; the sinful body, in other words, was not the whole of a person’s human, fleshly existence, but the remnants of another body that remained within the flesh.⁵¹ It was this remnant or body of sin that Elton interpreted as the ‘body of death’ because it was a ‘deadly thing in itself, and makes us liable to death’. Or, to put it another way, the remnant or body of sin within the flesh not only contained the power of death; the entire individual, body and soul, was bound to its lingering influence. ‘Without God’s mercy’, wrote Elton, the power of death within the Apostle and others would lead ‘to death temporal, and to death eternal.’

Therefore, in Elton’s estimation, there was no escape from the ‘body of this death’ by physical death, suicide or otherwise. The ‘body of this death’ was something that resided both, in part, in the human flesh and eternal soul. It was only by walking in

⁵⁰ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 16 – 17. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 43.

⁵¹ In his last extant manuscript, Nehemiah also referred to his natural corruption as a ‘relic’ in a list of ‘Reasons why God suffers some Relics of sin still to abide in his children’. Interestingly, he also concludes that list by referring to the example of the Apostle Paul. See FS MS V.a.436, fol. 50. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 277 – 278.

the ‘newness life’ offered in the crucified and risen Christ that ‘death hath no more dominion’ over the physical and eternal existence of the individual.⁵²

If, in fact, Nehemiah was able to receive Elton’s recommendation of the Apostle Paul as an example and his interpretation of the phrase ‘body of this death’, then he would have found a perspective that affirmed his resolve to overcome his temptations by the use of pietistic ‘means’. From his reflections on what he considered the Apostle Paul’s personal spiritual struggle in v. 24, Elton encouraged his reader to continue in the pursuit of piety. While the individual, like the Apostle Paul, might grow weary because he or she ‘cannot come to be altogether freed from the corruption of nature’ and look for deliverance from that corruption in God, this did not mean that he or she should neglect the use of ‘all good means’ to help in the combat against the power of death that remained with them. According to Elton, the individual should persist to be ‘diligent hearing and reading in the Word of God, Prayer, and the like; yea, let us be restless and discontent in this respect: that is an holy discontentment, when we find ourselves clogged with unbelief, with doubting, with distrust, and the like’.⁵³ To succumb to such neglect was the result of being ‘blinded by the Devil’ and to become the ‘Devil’s fools’. For, according to Elton, the practice of the Devil is to ‘hoodwink’ and make individual’s ‘neglect the timely using of means, by which God worketh’ to deliver those who suffer ‘under the power of sin and Satan’.⁵⁴

That Nehemiah probably received Elton’s exposition of Romans 7:24, and employed the use of pietistic ‘means’ suggested there, was evidenced on the second of two unpaginated sheets of paper that were inserted in his manuscript where he

⁵² Elton, *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner Answered*, pp. 459 – 460.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 475 – 476.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 476 – 477.

copied Romans 7:24.⁵⁵ On this paper, Nehemiah wrote that he should ‘Remember forever’ how God’s ‘exceeding great mercy’ worked through his use of ‘means’ to deliver him from the sins of lust, which had prompted his most recent thoughts of suicide in the first place. He then continued by reporting that the ‘means’ God used in that deliverance consisted not only of reading ‘much of the fearful sin of adultery’, but also of talking about his sinful desire with the ‘party whom (he) had in mind to commit folly with’. Nehemiah also testified that he would often speak to this woman ‘of that grievous sin of whoredom and when the conscience is awakened, oh how it will stare in one’s face’. He told her ‘what a hideous and doleful cry it will be when two souls shall cry together for vengeance’. After this litany of means Nehemiah stated once again that it was through these ‘means’ that he believed ‘God did see me, although no other did see me, and I did consider the great mercy of God in keeping me and causing me to discern a temptation in the time of temptation’.⁵⁶

The ultimate benefit of Elton’s exposition of Romans 7:24 was how it may have enabled Nehemiah to engage his life with the life others rather than seek an escape from the engagement by suicide. Not only had Nehemiah deployed the use of pietistic ‘means’ to confront the temptation of adultery. It had also helped him to continue to engage with the life of his family and not give into despair and desire death in the face of those obligations required of him as a husband, father, and employer. Proof that Elton’s book probably helped Nehemiah in this way was manifest in the way he concluded his earliest extant manuscript. In a section that he entitled ‘My postscript to my living wife, children, and Friends’, Nehemiah reflected on the ground that he covered in the manuscript. He recalled his struggles with sin

⁵⁵ The inserted, unpaginated sheets were likely added later, as a kind of addendum to what Nehemiah had already written. It is impossible to know how much later, because Nehemiah did not date these pages or provide clues as to when he wrote them.

⁵⁶ The unpaginated sheets are located between fols. 16 and 17 in GL MS 204.

and the thoughts of death it inspired. Addressing his ‘wife and loving friends’, he then wrote out this recollection that

Now you know, what my life hath been, even full of sorrows... and this book is a witness of some of my sorrows, both inward and outward: how much grief within and troubles without, as for outward sorrows: among the rest of you what a grief it is unto me, that I am such a burden unto diverse of my friends, and for inward sorrows it is best known to my God: how long I have groaned under some corruptions which still doth boil and bubble up do what I can and therefore is death welcome that puts to an end these days of sins against my good God.⁵⁷

Nehemiah’s words in these concluding remarks to his earliest extant manuscript were strikingly similar to the following passage from Elton’s text. Note especially the last lines from both passages:

Surely then, God’s children have not a perfection of blessedness in the time of this life, but their blessedness here is mixed with some misery... in that they carry about the remainder of sin, and shall carry it so long as the live in this world; and that defiles their best actions, and makes them offend their good and gracious God, and grieve his Spirit, and draws on them many times the afflicting hand of God; and so their blessedness here is but in part, and shall not be made perfect in respect of full freedom from sin, till their souls be removed out of their bodies. And this should make God’s children willingly embrace death, when it comes; death should be welcome to them, because that will set them at liberty, not only from the miseries of this world, but also from sin, the greatest burden, grief, and vexation to their souls all their life long.⁵⁸

From suicidal despair to the Bible and Gouge to the example of the Apostle Paul offered in Edward Elton’s *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner* (1618), Nehemiah ended his earliest extant manuscript with an acknowledgment of the difficulties and sorrows caused by his struggle with sinful corruption. It was an acknowledgment, though, that did not indicate his desire to escape that struggle by self-murder. This passage revealed a new perspective: to continue on with his pursuit of piety in the midst his struggle with sin, and to welcome death, whenever it might come. This

⁵⁷ GL MS 204, fol. 509. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Elton, *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner Answered*, p. 462.

perspective reflected the changes that had been taking place in Nehemiah's understanding death since the time of his temptations. Progressing through Biblical teachings about the power of death within and without and turning to the example of the Apostle Paul, Nehemiah continued to find the will to undergo the strains and pressures of engaging with his life in the context of his family, despite the possibility that he might suffer the 'horror and terror of conscience' for additional sins.

Even years after he concluded his earliest extant manuscript and thought differently of his use of particular use of pietistic 'means', Nehemiah continued to exalt the example of the Apostle Paul and gesture toward the positive lessons that he may have gained from his study of Romans 7:24. On two more unpaginated sheets that he seems to have written and inserted into his earliest extant manuscript after 1641, Nehemiah lamented that his use of the 'Articles' had 'entangled' him. He confessed that while his attempts to abide by these rules taken from his reading of the Bible and other books had 'some good effects', they also 'laid a heavy burden upon' him. He compared the feeling of this great weight of spiritual obligation 'like unto Pharaoh's chariots, when the wheels were struck off they went heavily and slowly, so that they drove them with much ado; even so hath my Christian walk been to heaven slowly with much ado'. He then voiced his exasperation with the struggle against sin, similar to the way Elton had interpreted the purpose of Paul's question in Romans 7:24. Just as Elton had read Paul's exclamation "'O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'" as a cry from one weary due to his fight with sin, Nehemiah now seemed express the same sentiment in his own words by writing, 'Oh how many ways have I taken to live a holy life?' More significant, however, was the reason Nehemiah felt such dissatisfaction. He wrote that his slow pace to heaven because of his use of rigorous pietistic 'means' had demonstrated his

failure to serve as an example like the Apostle. He bemoaned the idea that he could ‘never persuade any Christian to follow’ him because of his entanglement in the Articles and other ‘means’ like diary writing and recording ‘all the checks and chidings’ of his conscience. His response to this failure, however, did not deter him from his admiration for Paul. On the contrary, his reaction to the disappointment he expressed suggested that he had finally grasped the answer that Paul offered in Romans 7:25. Just as Paul had responded to the question posed in Romans 7:24, ‘Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’ with the response ‘I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord’, Elton, too, had suggested that the individual was to ultimately depend upon the grace of God in Christ for deliverance from the power of death. In similar fashion, Nehemiah responded to his own circumstance by writing, ‘For in one’s own strength shall no man stand’, and ‘without me, saith Christ, you can do nothing’. These were passages of Scripture that then led Nehemiah to advise his reader that if he or she did look to him as an example for piety to look past the ‘breaking forth of corruptions through the sin that dwells in me’ and ‘let the word of God be the rule and guide of your life to walk by’. He finally indicated that the inspiration for viewing himself as an example like this was based upon the example of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:1: ‘And as the Apostle saith, Be ye followers of me as I am of Christ’.⁵⁹

However, the benefit that Nehemiah found in the example of the Apostle Paul in his study of death, and the efforts he exerted to move beyond his temptation to commit suicide, did not end with the conclusion of his first extant manuscript. The influence of Paul’s writings was also evident in Nehemiah’s attempts to identify what he and his reader might learn from stories of sudden and/or tragic death that he copied

⁵⁹ GL MS 204, unpaginated inserts between fols. 44 – 45. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 49.

into his second extant manuscript entitled ‘A Memorial of God’s Judgments upon Sabbath Breakers, Drunkards, and Other Vile Livers’.⁶⁰ Nehemiah wrote in this manuscript from the middle part of his life, in the early 1630s, to the later part of his life in the mid 1650s. The manuscript was comprised of stories of death that occurred during battles fought in the Civil War, in devastating fires and other catastrophes, as well as in strange inexplicable accidents. His dependence upon the example of the Apostle in interpreting these events was revealed from the very beginning of the manuscript, in the letter ‘To the Christian Reader’, when he copied Paul’s words in Romans 11:33: ‘O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out’.⁶¹ This verse seemed to be Nehemiah’s way of expressing his belief that God’s reasons and ability in causing the sudden or tragic death of certain people was beyond human scrutiny. As was later revealed, however, it did not mean that one could not observe in these deaths useful pietistic lessons. After recording several accounts of suicide in this manuscript that he had either heard about from others or read in news pamphlets, Nehemiah identified what he perceived were five ‘uses’ or practical lessons to be learned from these accounts. Not only did he base three of those five ‘uses’ on the teachings of the Apostle Paul in Romans and 1 Corinthians, but even the fact that such stories were beneficial for piety. Quoting 1 Corinthians 10:11, Nehemiah wrote, ‘This I say, if such as they, that were wise and learned laid violent hands on themselves, this should make us to watch over ourselves and to be warned by them as the Apostle saith (1 Corin X II) Now all these things came unto them for examples, and were written to admonish us upon whom the end of the world are come’.⁶²

⁶⁰ This is not to suggest that Nehemiah looked to examples of providential deaths in Paul’s New Testament epistles, but to the Apostle’s theology of providence in historical events and circumstances.

⁶¹ BL MS 1457, fol. 3.

⁶² Ibid., fol. 7.

Nehemiah referred to 1 Corinthians 10:11 at least two more times in his second extant manuscript, as a way to validate his reasons for recording stories of the deaths of others. For instance, he referred to this verse again before recording several stories of sudden death experienced by those who had broken the Sabbath.⁶³ He then copied the verse once more in his list of four ‘uses’ for observing in several accounts of others who died suddenly for no reason at all.⁶⁴ Yet, despite the fact that he appeared to copy the verse only twice, it seemed to serve as an undercurrent for the entire project. All of the events that caused the stories of sudden or tragic deaths that he recorded into his second extant manuscript were to serve as ‘examples’ that were written to ‘admonish’ himself and those who read this material. For example, after recording the details of a devastating fire that took place on London Bridge in 1633, as well as ‘the names and trades of those houses that were burnt’, Nehemiah wrote the following,

But the good Lord, our God, teach us so that we may not be vain beholders or hearers of this wonderful and fearfull, yet just work of the Lord, but that we may all make such use of this and all other (of) his judgments and mercies as he requireth in his word we should do, and as other of his children have done.⁶⁵

For some, Nehemiah’s purpose in recording stories of sudden and/or tragic death into his second extant manuscript reflected his psychological or political interests. According to one theory, Nehemiah sought to find through his writing and evaluation of these stories that revealed the ‘arbitrariness of the violence and destructiveness of the times, and the general helplessness of man in the face of flood and fire, accident and disease... some meaning, justice, and comfort’.⁶⁶ According to another theory, however, because Nehemiah seemed to express his support for the Puritans and the Parliamentary efforts during the Civil War in stories like the one that

⁶³ Ibid., fol. 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid., fol. 32r.

⁶⁵ Ibid., fol. 94.

⁶⁶ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, pp. 52 – 53.

reported the casualties incurred at the Battle of Edgehill or another that told of the death of several Royalist troops from a fire at Oxford, these stories demonstrated his political biases. According to this latter theory, it was Nehemiah's political interest that began his interest in the stories of sudden and/or tragic death in the first place.⁶⁷

The problem with both of the above theories is that they fail to stress how Nehemiah used stories of sudden and/or tragic death in his second extant manuscript as a source of practical, pietistic 'means' in a manner that he believed followed the example of the Apostle Paul in Scripture. This failure is perhaps due to the fact that it relies on the notion that Nehemiah was only influenced by those sources that he read and/or copied similar stories found in some of his other manuscripts.⁶⁸ In doing so, however, it neglects how he read the Bible for himself and, indeed, stressed the importance of his own reliance upon the 'word of God'. Nehemiah made known, at the start of his second extant manuscript, his belief in the importance of the Bible in judging the type of strange accidents that his text contained.

The importance of reading and applying Scripture for Nehemiah was revealed in a story that he recorded in the opening pages of his second extant manuscript about a 'poor man of Buckinghamshire that went all in black cloth, with his hat commonly under his arm, (and) did for the space of one whole year commonly three days in a week before the gates of White Hall'. According to Nehemiah's manuscript, this 'poor man from Buckinghamshire' prayed, 'an effectual prayer' 'for three quarters of an hour long', before the King's palace and cried out 'against the sins of those times, calling for woe and vengeance on all papists, and all they did adhere to popery'. He also wrote that the man in black then went 'through London ' with his hat under his

⁶⁷ Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 6, n. 9. Diane Purkiss, *The English Civil War*, (London: Harper Press, 2006), 285.

⁶⁸ Seaver, *Wallington's World*, pp. 46 – 49. Seaver points to the fact that Nehemiah copied stories from Thomas Beard's *The Theatre of God's Judgments* in BL MS 21935, fol. 23r, as evidence that Beard supplied him with an overarching interpretive framework for BL MS 1457.

arm, crying woe to Rome, woe to all papists, woe to the pope, with many other execrations against papists'. Nehemiah even confirmed that he and 'seen and heard' the man for himself 'at the corner of the street, crying in a doleful manner, saying woe to London, woe to the inhabitants of London'. Yet, despite any intonations that he may have agreed with what the 'poor man from Buckinghamshire' said, Nehemiah also noted that many people 'counted' this individual a 'mad man'. He was sure that the man 'talked very sensibly and honestly', but his one criticism was that that he did not hear him 'bring from the word of God any sound ground for what he did'.⁶⁹ This desire for proof from Scripture to validate what the 'poor man from Buckinghamshire' did could also be applied to the pattern Nehemiah followed in recording the sudden and/or tragic death of others in his second extant manuscript. In either the preface to those sections where the stories were written or in his list of 'uses' that followed, Nehemiah nearly always tried to attach a passage or verse from the Bible seemingly as a way to attest that what he was writing was based in a pattern discernable in 'the word of God'. The words from the Apostle Paul's New Testament epistles were apparently a major part of that pattern.

In order to understand, therefore, how the example of the Apostle Paul influenced Nehemiah to use stories of sudden and/or tragic death as a source of practical, pietistic 'means' in his second extant manuscript, one must take seriously the possibility that he read and applied the teachings of Scripture for himself. More than this, though, one must examine the passage or passages from Paul's writings to which Nehemiah consistently referred. Nehemiah's repeated reference to 1 Corinthians 10:11, as well as the undercurrent of this verse throughout his second

⁶⁹ BL MS 1457, fol. 4r. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 97 – 98.

extant manuscript, indicates that this passage is where such an examination should focus.

By equating his purpose in recording the stories of sudden and/or tragic death in his manuscripts with the ‘examples’ mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:11, Nehemiah was associating those tales with what were well-known episodes from the history of Israel in the Old Testament.⁷⁰ Additional evidence from his manuscript will also show that comments made by Paul in the larger context of 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 provided him with a way to interpret those stories as well. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-10, Paul specifically mentioned the flight of the Israelites out of Egypt by God’s deliverance through the parting of the Red Sea. After the Israelites had escaped, some of them then turned their backs on God by worshiping idols, committing sexual immorality, and complaining against God’s provision of food and water in the desert. Paul wrote that because some of the Israelites did this many of them died. According to 1 Corinthians 10:5, many ‘were overthrown in the wilderness’, and in v.8 up to twenty-three thousand died in one day. Others died because they tempted God and were ‘destroyed by serpents’. Still others ‘murmured’ or complained against God and were ‘destroyed of the destroyer’, or an angel of death. Paul then interpreted from these stories what warning his readers should learn from them. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1 - 4, those who committed such sins were not to be viewed as separate or more sinful from those who did not sin. ‘All’ of the Israelites who escaped Egypt passed through God’s miracle of parting the Red Sea and were led by God under a cloud through the desert. Moreover, ‘all’ of those Israelites were ‘baptized

⁷⁰ Equating the history of Israel with English history was actually a common practice for Nehemiah. In fact, he entitled another manuscript that he wrote in 1645, which primarily dealt with the events of the English Civil War, ‘A Record of mercies continued, or yet God is good to Israel’. See TP MS 68.20. A more frequent way of making this comparison, for Nehemiah was the phrase ‘children of God’. For examples of Nehemiah’s use of the phrase ‘children of God’, see GL MS 204, fols. 424, 448, and 449. See also Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, p. 142 – 143.

unto Moses' by passing through the sea and following that cloud. They 'all' also ate the same 'spiritual' meat and 'did all drink the same spiritual drink (for they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them: and the Rock was Christ).' It was the obvious emphasis placed upon the word 'all' in these verses that Paul formed the main thesis for the warning or admonition that his readers should observe. The sin and sudden or tragic death of some of that group of ancient Israelites, all of whom partook of God's deliverance and received God's care in the daily provision of manna, should cause those who heard or read these stories to be on guard against self-delusion or false pride in their own strength to withstand temptation. 'Wherefore', Paul wrote, 'let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall'. In Paul's estimation, everyone was susceptible to temptation, because the experience of temptation was common to all. This was indicated by what Paul wrote in the first half of 1 Corinthians 10:13: 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as appertaineth to man'. The inability to withstand spiritual temptation and the inevitability of that experience led Paul to his final point in regards to what his readers were to learn from the stories of death from Israel's past. 'God is faithful', Paul proclaimed in the second half of 1 Corinthians 10:13, 'which will not suffer you to be tempted above that you be able, but will even give the issue with the temptation, that ye may be able to bear it'.⁷¹ According this passage, Paul meant that his readers were to ultimately trust in God for their deliverance from temptations.

Nehemiah's second extant manuscript reveals that it was from his reading of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 that led him to interpret the stories of sudden and/or tragic deaths he recorded therein as an exhortation to withstand those common temptations that could lead to death by trusting in God. Moreover, based on

⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 10:13, *The Geneva Bible: the Bible of the Protestant Reformation: based on the 1560 edition*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007).

the influence of Paul, this exhortation was meant for anyone who might accept it, no matter his or her political affiliation or any ideological preference. This was evident not only from seeing how Nehemiah associated the stories sudden and/or tragic deaths that he copied into his manuscript with the ‘examples’ from ancient Israel’s past. It was also manifest in the fact that he copied other verses from 1 Corinthians 10 and gestured toward the meaning of those verses in other places in the manuscript. For example, in the second ‘use’ that Nehemiah derived from the stories of suicide that he recorded into the manuscript, he copied 1 Corinthians 10:12 as a way to support his observation that he and his reader should ‘take heed of judging others’. In his third ‘use’ in this section, Nehemiah then seemed to reflect his understanding of the unity and commonality expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 when he wrote that ‘all’ the Israelites were susceptible to the temptations that only some fell victim to.

Nehemiah wrote, ‘Thirdly, let us (heed) take of melancholy and solitariness for Satan works much upon such’, but the emphasis here was on solitude, not melancholy. He continued by writing, ‘Therefore, such as love solitariness, love not their own souls, for they give great advantage to Satan to assault them and therefore we should take heed of it’. The point being, in other words, that breaking away from the herd might result in or be a symptom of one’s desire to fulfill his or her deadly sinful appetite. In his fourth use, Nehemiah communicated his view that those who had not given in to the temptation to commit suicide should ‘praise God’; for, according to his manuscript, it was only because God ‘hath not forsaken us unto ourselves’ that he and others had not succumb to the temptation of self-murder themselves. In his fifth and final ‘use’, though, Nehemiah paraphrased Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 10:9.

Whereas Paul wrote in that verse, ‘Neither murmur ye, as some of (the Israelites) also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer’, Nehemiah wrote, ‘Fifthly, let us

pray earnestly unto God to keep us still and not leave us unto ourselves to grumble with Satan, but that he would strengthen us with his strength from above'.⁷² While Nehemiah referenced other passages of Scripture in uses he derived from other stories of sudden and/or tragic death in his second extant manuscript, 1 Corinthians 10:1 – 13 and pietistic means he attached to this passage written by the Apostle Paul remained a subtle but noticeable influence.⁷³

It was, indeed, probable that the Apostle Paul as an example for Nehemiah in his study of death prompted him to write in last extant manuscript, just four years before his death in 1654, that 'with God's help out of myself and by faith suck virtue from Jesus Christ'. The phrase 'suck virtue' actually reflected the same Pauline theology expressed in Romans 7, and was recorded by Nehemiah into this last extant manuscript on more than one occasion. The first occasion was on 29 July, when he wrote that in contemplating 'God's Mercies, I did awake at 3 o' clock and had many distracted thoughts and cares both for soul and body'. The particular reflections that caused him to wake had to do sin and his failure to obey God's 'holy law'. He could 'see no way for help but to cast myself into the bosom of Jesus Christ'. No matter what he did - reflect on 'all those heavy curses and threats of misery here and hereafter', 'see Hell with the Devils and the damned and all the horrors their gabing and I ready to drop into it', 'Nay if (he) should write the life of (his) Saviour Jesus Christ and keep that about me to look one and to Imitate' - he still felt that he was 'such a polluted nature (he) could not but sin'. His only salvation, as he saw it, was 'Except by Faith I suck virtue from Jesus Christ'. The pursuit and value of pietistic 'means' seemed to have become powerless in his opinion. He wrote, 'For I am a lost and undone creature and can do nothing. It must be God's free grace that must save

⁷² BL MS 1457, fol. 7. David Booy provides three of these five 'uses' in *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 98.

⁷³ In addition to BL MS 1457, fol. 94, see also BL MS 1457, fol. 32.

me, for I find all my risings early to duties and all my hearing: Reading, fasting and praying, striving to draw others to heaven, and my writing and whatever is nothing but a continual sinnings and I am a firebrand of hell for the wrath of God seize upon to all eternity'.⁷⁴ The claim that he was giving up on piety, however, seemed to reflect the lessons he had learned from his study of Elton's exposition of Romans 7:24. For it was not that pietistic means were powerless or ineffectual. Pietistic means simply could not provide complete deliverance from lingering 'relic' of corruption that still remained from 'the body of this death'. This was evident when five months later, in December 1654, Nehemiah penned one of his last entries in his last extant manuscript. Struggling to come up with a new and more effective approach to his pietistic efforts Nehemiah wrote that while he would 'buy no more books and so not to write so much', he would nevertheless not give up 'the work of Examination, nor any holy duty, nor altogether my writing, but sometimes to write in one end of my writing book (that hath some waste paper called The Travelers Meditation, which I was writing in the year 1632)'. This approach, he claimed, was because 'God hath given me an heart to resolve to be for him and to walk close with in holiness of life, but I am Jealous of my weak nature and my deceitful heart; therefore I will with God's help out of myself and by Faith suck virtue from Jesus Christ to enable me who saith without him I can do nothing'.⁷⁵

Nehemiah's reliance upon Paul was, in fact, very prominent in his last extant manuscript and largely seen in his deployment of Romans 7, which could have come from his own reading of the Bible or other books. For example, in July 1654, Nehemiah wrote that while lying in bed he could not sleep due to thoughts of what a 'sinful wretch' he was. Examining his life 'by the law of God', he then 'did think of

⁷⁴ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 317 – 318. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 312.

⁷⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 537 – 538. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 342 – 343.

that in Romans 7'. He confessed that 'what Paul said I applied unto myself as also I did think of God's free grace and love in Jesus Christ and how Jesus Christ is in heaven pleading for me'. His reflections on Romans 7 at this time, however, also seemed to evoke Elton's *The Complaint of a Sanctified Sinner* (1618). He continued writing, 'So a while after 3 o'clock I did arise and in my closet there did pour out my complaint to God...' Three months later, on 7 October, he then wrote that at four o'clock in the morning he awoke 'out of an heavenly dream out of Romans 7'. He did not describe his dream on this occasion, but only admitted that it was 'too large for me to write it, neither can I relate the excellency of it now I am awake as I did find of it when I was asleep; it did my soul good to think of it, which raised my heart to praise my God for it'. Thoughts of his spiritual estate woke him once more, on 22 October. He recorded in his manuscript that 'at a while after two o'clock I did awake out of fruitful and vain worldly dreams', which sent him 'upon Examination'. He testified that the intense vanity of his dreams was such that he 'could not get a good thought to abide' within him. 'Yet upon further search (he) did find (that he) could truly say with the Apostle in Romans 7:19 – 23, 25'. He confessed that his reflections on this passage of scripture brought him 'some comfort', and 'thus (he) fell asleep' only to be awoken again at four o'clock by thoughts of 'what a great account (he) would have to give to one day, not only for this morning and all my sins in this book (meaning his last extant manuscript), but of the rest in all my books, nay and all that are not written and those sins I know not'. These thoughts caused him to 'tremble' and after while to arise from his bed and pray. He wrote in his manuscript that he 'did earnestly pray for an upright, sincere, holy heart and that God would be with me this

day in all the duties, both in private and public that I am to perform'.⁷⁶

Nehemiah's lifelong interest in the subject of death, the repeated mention of sleeplessness and dreams in connection with references to Romans at this time as well as the curious phrase 'suck virtue from Jesus Christ', though, suggested his reading of a specific book. In 1640, a collection of funeral sermons written by Daniel Featly, Martin Day, Richard Sibbes, Thomas Taylor, and other divines had been published under the title *Threnoikos: The house of mourning; furnished with directions for preparations to meditations of consolations at the hour of death* (1640). In a sermon contained in this book and based on the Apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 13:11, entitled 'Saint Paul's Trumpet; or, An Alarm for Sleepy Christians', the author wrote, 'Therefore the second thing that a man must do to awake himself out of sleep is to get faith in his soul, that he may suck virtue from Christ, and to get his senses loosed that he may see and taste, and feel the goodness of God, which without Christ he cannot attain'.⁷⁷ The context of this verse in the sermon had to do with 'waking, or arising out of sleep'. By 'sleep', the writer meant 'spiritual sleep', or 'the death and privation of grace in the soul; as the other (natural sleep and moral sleep) is the privation of life in the body'. The entire text, however, involved a comparison between one type of sleep and another. These other types of sleep were natural sleep, or the sleep of the body at night, and moral sleep, which he defined as 'natural death', or the 'dissolution of nature, which the Scripture speaketh, Dan. 12:2. They that sleep in the dust, shall rise again'. The focus of the text centered primarily on the comparison between the sleep of sin and natural sleep. A person, in other words, could experience similar dreams of 'conceits, false joys, false fears, and false hopes,

⁷⁶ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 305, 382, and 401 - 402. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 309, 325, and 330.

⁷⁷ H. W., *Threnoikos: The house of mourning; furnished with directions for preparations to meditations of consolations at the hour of death*, (London, 1640), p. 503.

etc.’ during the sleep of sin that he or she could during natural sleep.⁷⁸ The reference to sucking virtue from Christ in the section about ‘waking, or arising out of sleep’, had to do with a comparison between the experience of waking from natural sleep, or the sleep of the body at night, and the experience of waking from the sleep of sin. According to the text, just as a ‘rousing of the senses’ and a fresh vigor to pursue a new day comes when a person wakes from a natural sleep, when a person wakes from the sleep of sin through ‘faith in the Son of God’ ‘it restores new senses, and life, that they are able to walk in the ways of God, and to move in the actions of godliness and Christianity’. Waking from the sleep of sin through faith in Christ, therefore, was to experience a new life characterized by sucking ‘virtue from Christ’.⁷⁹

Whatever the source for Nehemiah’s references to Paul and the need to ‘suck virtue from Jesus Christ’ might have been in his last extant manuscript, the expression of his desire to engage his life with virtue, even when a natural death and a release from the cares of the world seemed imminent, demonstrated a sharp contrast from his view of death during his temptations. It was change that had not come easy, or with the sudden transformation brought about by conversion or the rebirth of his soul, but was a gain made by increments over a long and difficult journey that involved the study death through theological reflection based upon his reading of the Bible and other books or stories of death that heard about or read in news pamphlets. Rather than merely a preparation for death and the afterlife, Nehemiah chose to learn from his study of death lessons that helped him live in the world.⁸⁰ Death, in this way, had served as a teacher, instructing him on how to engage his life with the life of others

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 500 – 501.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 502 – 503.

⁸⁰ On the Reformed Protestant emphasis of preparing for death, see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England*, pp. 60 – 61. Nehemiah’s perspective appears to resemble more closely what Eamon Duffy has described as the purpose of *macabre* art among late medieval Catholics. See Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 330 – 335.

rather than viewing death as an ultimate escape. It was a method that emphasized more than simply the need to prepare for death, but the significance of living in the here-and-now in a godly manner for its own sake. It was also a method that he had learned from following the example of the Apostle Paul in his New Testament epistles, especially Paul's writings in Edward Elton's illumination of Romans 7. One could say that Nehemiah's expression of the desire to 'suck virtue of Jesus Christ' in the face of his approaching death in 1654 was his way of finally responding to the question of Romans 7:24, 'O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

Chapter 6

Conclusion: death in Wallington's world

The goal of this thesis has been to understand how Nehemiah Wallington, an early modern Protestant, responded to the constant display of and experience with death in his life. It is a goal that has been pursued, in the previous chapters, through an examination of Nehemiah's seven extant manuscripts and those other artefacts to which he referred or may have influenced him in his cultural and historical context. In contrast to previous studies, I have tried to avoid an interpretation of this material that focuses on the psychological impact of Puritan teaching on Nehemiah. I have chosen instead to focus on a subject and experience that frequently appeared in his extant writings and made an effort to follow Nehemiah's lead in order to evaluate how Puritan teaching helped him to understand the subject better and to cope with that experience. My interest in Nehemiah's response to death began with a curiosity about how he might have been affected by certain ideas that stood at the centre of significant religious and ideological changes in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century England. These ideas revolved round those larger discursive formations such as an individual's relationship with society, virtue, and the self. It was with these goals and interests in mind that I set out to answer these questions: As an early modern Protestant, a Puritan, how did Nehemiah respond to death in the absence of the Mass and those pietistic practices that surrounded the doctrine of purgatory? In the face of death, did he engage society and pursue virtue in relationship with others, or was he simply a mad Calvinist who exhibited the isolating and privatizing tendencies commonly associated with early modern Protestantism? If he did pursue virtue and

engagement with society, did he understand and approach that effort by an attempt to fashion a 'self'? I hope that my pursuit of the answers to these questions has provided a new perspective in regards to the historical figure of Nehemiah Wallington, especially those concerned with the areas of early modern autobiography and Puritan theology.

From early in his life, Nehemiah witnessed the death of close family members. His mother died when he was five years old. Six years later, in 1609, three of his stepsiblings died, including his favourite childhood companion, Philip Hinde. From 1618 to 1623, Nehemiah even tried to bring death upon himself in ten suicide attempts. He recorded into his manuscripts that he witnessed the casualties wrought by plague in London, from 1625 to 1626. From 1625 to 1632, he also witnessed the death of four of his five children. He noted the death of individuals from terrible accidents in the streets just outside his door. He copied into his manuscript the fatalities wrought by the violence of the Civil War in the early 1640s. Indeed, as this thesis has shown, throughout his manuscripts Nehemiah not only recorded events and episodes of death, but also sought to understand the meaning of death.

While others have seen great division and differences between the early modern Protestant response to death and the response prescribed by the late medieval Catholic Church, Nehemiah's manuscripts have evidenced some similarities. In his last extant manuscript, 'An Extract of the Passages of My Life, or The Book of All My Writing Books', Nehemiah's initial response to death of his stepsiblings, in 1609, reflected a common theological assumption that stretched back beyond the Middle Ages. In the second chapter of this thesis, it was revealed that he seemed to consider the event of his stepsiblings' death and his removal from his father's house, perhaps in an attempt to shield from the illness, as a consequence of his sin. This perspective

was something that all three of the great world religions, including Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, held entering the Middle Ages. It was also a theology that the holy book shared by Jews, Roman Catholics, and Protestants seemed to teach in Old Testament stories like the Exodus and the Passover. Nehemiah's response to his stepsiblings' death, however, seemed to reflect what others have described as typical of a Roman Catholic theology in the Later Middle Ages. In the aftermath of that terrible tragedy in his father's house, Nehemiah wrote in his last extant manuscript that he made a promise to God to reform his life. He then proceeded not only to try and conform his life to a godly pattern, but began to focus on the task of self-examination and kept a written record of his sins. This was a response that others have argued was typical of the Roman dominated Western Christian Church coming out of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹ It is difficult to say where Nehemiah might have learned to respond to death in this manner. The first chapter argued that the practice of writing down his sins was not unique to Nehemiah. It was a practice that Reformed Protestant clergy were also attempting alongside their daily reflections and self-examinations. Just as difficult to identify is the source that may have influence Nehemiah to respond to his stepsiblings' death by attempting to reform or conform his life to pattern of life he thought was acceptable to God. Yet, the second chapter of this thesis demonstrated that reflecting on death, as a source of pietistic motivation to curb sinful desires and behaviours, was part of the pietistic practice associated with Christian doctrine of mortification. The belief that God caused death by sending violent afflictions and sufferings was also not exclusive to Nehemiah. In addition to the theology espoused by William Gouge in *God's Three Arrows* (1631), the third chapter of this thesis noted that the eminently influential sixteenth century

¹ Naphy and Spicer, *The Black Death: A history of plagues*, pp. 23-26.

Protestant theologian, John Calvin, encouraged his readers to interpret such afflictions as an act of God's paternal love and fatherly correction.²

Another similarity between Nehemiah's response to death and the response prescribed by the late medieval Catholic Church was in regards to engagement with society versus what others have seen as the isolating or privatizing tendencies frequently attributed to early modern Protestantism. According to Eamon Duffy, the fears and thoughts of death in late medieval society were 'endlessly harnessed by preachers and dramatists, not to call people away from social involvement but to promote virtue and sociability in this world'.³ In addition to the Mass, Duffy has suggested that the individual could also hope to lessen their stay in purgatory and perhaps manage the fears associated with death by doing works of penance and participate in alms-giving. While in practice, adds Ralph Houlbrooke, 'very few Christians could hope to escape purgatory altogether', the individual could 'construct their own humble imitations of the mercy of God in good works' and perhaps shorten their own stay in purgatory. The individual could quicken their progress toward heaven by contributing to the upkeep of hospitals, giving money to beggars, or providing in their wills the funds to help village pay taxes to the king.⁴ The obvious impact of all this was both the individual and communal benefits of the late medieval Catholic Church's theology and practice in response to death. As a deeply committed early modern Protestant, there is little surprise in the fact that Nehemiah's manuscripts do not evidence his finding comfort in the Mass or in those Catholic pietistic practices that surrounded the doctrine of purgatory. The interpretation of those late medieval Catholic modes of worship and piety as an instigation to promote

² Gouge, *God's three arrows: plague, famine, sword*, p. 6. Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book III, x, 10.

³ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 303.

⁴ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750*, 36.

virtue and sociability, however, were certainly reflected in Nehemiah's response to death. From his attempts to reform his life by controlling his sinful behaviour particularly in relationship with his father to his efforts to communicate with his reader through the style and method by which he crafted his manuscripts, Nehemiah seems to have responded to death with an eye toward his engagement with society from early in his life. He deployed the manicule so that his reader might more easily identify what Nehemiah felt was important information. He incorporated dates and headers in his manuscripts in order to divide his text and allow his reader to navigate easily and discover information that was historically significant. His desire and effort to engage his life with others continued to be reflected throughout his suicidal period and into his later years as the fear that he could not do so with virtue was a central part to his temptation to end his own life. In the years after his attempted suicides, Nehemiah attempted to engage his life with the life of his family by making rules for himself and those he lived with. Engaging his life with virtue with the life of others was especially evident in his later years when he wrote in his last extant manuscript that he yearned to 'with God's help out of myself and by Faith suck virtue from Christ'.⁵

There were even similarities between Nehemiah's response to death and the late medieval Catholic Church's use of images presented in the *danse macabre* and the pietistic advice offered in the *Ars Moriendi*, otherwise known as the *Art of Dying*. According to Duffy, in the hands of late medieval 'religious and moral teachers' the images of death in the *danse macabre* offered a vehicle 'to persuade the laity of the transience of earthly pleasures and goods, and the need to seek eternal salvation at all

⁵ FS MS V.a.436, fol. 538. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 343.

costs'.⁶ The purpose of the popular Catholic tract known as the *Ars Moriendi* was to remind the individual that there was still time to repent. Through examples of 'great sinners who had by reliance on the cross become great saints', the *Ars Moriendi* instructed the individual that he or she could still confess their sins and place their trust in the propitiating act of Jesus by his death on the Cross. This was manifest in the following passages that encouraged the dying to 'Put all thy trust in his passion and in his death, and think only thereon, and none other thing. With his death mettle thee and wrap thee therein'.⁷ The intent of the *Ars Moriendi* was to provide more than just comfort out of the idea that there was time to repent, it was also to encourage the individual to prepare for death by committing themselves to a life of piety and spiritual devotion. The clearest connection between the late medieval Church's use of images from the *danse macabre* and Nehemiah's response to death was in his brief use of the Anatomy of death, pictures of death, and books like Christopher Sutton's *Disce Mori: or Learn to Die* (1601). He reported in his last extant manuscript that he purchased this material in the year 1621 when he married and 'took an Apprentice'. He testified that these events prompted him to 'begin a new life' and to 'renew my promises with my God', but failed 'exceedingly' to keep these promises, which caused him to feel 'perplexed in mind'. The puzzlement over his failure made him 'desirous to die and yet sometimes in fear of death'.⁸ He quickly discarded the images and books of death upon the advice of a friend who told him such pietistic tools were 'superstitious', but in turning to the subject of death in the Bible and other books he continued to focus his attention on verbal images of human mortality. In consideration of the context of his efforts to use this material the intent was similar to the purpose of the images found in the *danse macabre* and the *Ars Moriendi* – to engage his life in

⁶ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 303 – 305.

⁷ Ibid., p. 315.

⁸ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 13 – 14. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 270 – 271.

society with spiritual devotion based in a consideration of the afterlife, or in his words, ‘to put me in mind and fit me for death’. He later confessed that his concern to prepare for death in this way was not based in an ‘understanding to look unto Jesus Christ from whence all help cometh’.⁹ Preparing for death, in other words, was less significant than participating in his life with others with a virtue supplied by trusting in Christ. While eschewing the idea of preparing for death may have differed from late medieval Catholic advice, his persistent emphasis engaging his life with the life of others through piety through his study of death in books even differed from the advice of Protestants. Protestant writers like William Perkins derided the late medieval Catholic requirement of confession, receive the Eucharist, and extreme unction. Nevertheless, Perkins still encouraged his readers to prepare for death by making confession for any sins that particularly plagued the conscience, to seek forgiveness, and forgive others. It was also incumbent upon the dying, in Perkins’ estimation, to prepare for death by making sure one’s family was well provided for after death.¹⁰ As argued in chapter five of this thesis, Nehemiah’s focus in his later adult years was reflective of his desire to follow the example of the Apostle Paul that he might find deliverance from the power of death while still alive in the world, which, based on his study of the Bible and other books, he believed existed within his body.

Nehemiah’s response to death did expose differences and clear distinctions between the way he understood virtue and engagement with society and the way others understood those same concepts in the late medieval and early modern world. For example, Renaissance humanists like Michel de Montaigne and Pierre Charron believed that the ideal relationship one could have with society was one best

⁹ FS MS V.a.436, fols. 13 – 14. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 270 – 271.

¹⁰ Perkins, *A salve for a sick man*, pp. 84 – 108, 191 – 194. See also Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480 – 1750*, pp. 159 – 160.

characterized by detachment and solitude. Montaigne and Charron prized a contemplative existence over one of active participation, which was based in a preference for the philosophy of Plato. Nehemiah, on the other hand, seemed to follow what Patrick Collinson has identified as a more Erasmian and Aristotelian approach. According to the latter, one was to influence society by an active and virtuous existence, which exhibited a passion for life and relationships in community rather than purely intellectual knowledge.¹¹ The difference between Nehemiah and those humanists who shared the perspective of Montaigne and Charron was perhaps most evident in the purpose for which Nehemiah composed his manuscripts. As noted in the second chapter of this thesis, in his search for ‘places’ of knowledge and information Nehemiah seemed to view his effort in much the same way as a commonplace writer. According to the traditional philosophy that undergirded commonplacing, the purpose was not only to instil knowledge, but also to assist the individual in living a more ethical or moral existence in the world. Nehemiah, then, not only wrote to help himself live according to certain principles but also sought to help his readers do the same. Nehemiah did not perceive himself as isolated from the world, even in writing. In fact, in his second extant manuscript, Nehemiah warned that the dangers of solitude could lead to the temptation of Satan to commit suicide, writing that ‘Satan works much upon such’ that seek such detachment from the world. ‘Therefore’, wrote Nehemiah, ‘such persons as love solitariness, love not their own souls, for they give great advantage to Satan to assault them and therefore we should take heed of it’.¹² In contrast to the Platonic humanists, then, Nehemiah seemed to resemble the perspective of William Perkins, who wrote that the God ‘makes a man fit to live well, In which clause standeth the proper effect of Virtue; which is to make

¹¹ Collinson, ‘A Magazine of Religious Patterns’, pp. 223-249.

¹² BL MS 1457, fol. 7. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 98.

those in who it is, to lead their lives well'.¹³ For Perkins, the knowledge of God enabled the individual to live an active, moral life in the world.¹⁴ From the death of his stepsiblings, in 1609, even during his temptations to commit suicide and even to the final years of his life Nehemiah's pursuit of piety, whether in reading, writing, or trying to obey the commands, was all done out of a desire to exhibit a life godliness in the context of his life with others.

The differences and distinctions between Nehemiah's view of virtue and social engagement and the way others viewed those concepts leads to questions of how Nehemiah may have regarded the presentation and construction of his 'self'. What was it about his life or person that he was trying to engage with in society in a godly manner? In *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington* (2007), David Booy argued that Nehemiah's tendency toward 'introspection and self-evaluation' reflected the early modern Protestant consciousness of individual existence, which served as one of the 'formative influences on the development of the modern sense of self'. In other words, according to Booy, Nehemiah perceived his possession of an individual 'essence', as something unique to his person that was capable of change and manipulation whether by his own efforts or by the 'surrounding culture and its informing ideologies and beliefs'.¹⁵ Booy went so far as to assert that Nehemiah's entire approach to writing his manuscripts was based upon this notion of 'self'. 'Where Wallington is concerned,' wrote Booy, 'we need to consider not only the kind of self he constructs in his texts, but also how he understands that self, and why he understand and presents it as he does'.¹⁶ For Booy, Nehemiah's urgency or

¹³ Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience*, pp. 472 – 473.

¹⁴ Porter, *Reformation and reaction in Tudor Cambridge*, p. 288, quoted in Michael Jenkins, 'Perkins, William (1558–1602)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 12 – 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

‘compulsion’ to write as part of his attempt to fashion a ‘self’.¹⁷ This argument offered a contrast from the argument of Paul Seaver, who suggested, in *Wallington’s World* (1985), that Nehemiah’s ‘urgency’ or ‘compulsion’ to write stemmed from an inner psychology formed by a desire to live up to his father’s expectations, or to demonstrate a proficiency in articulation equal to his older brother.¹⁸

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, over the last thirty years, many scholars have followed the lead of Stephen Greenblatt in referring to the attempt of early modern individual’s to construct an identity from an unadulterated ‘self’ as self-fashioning.¹⁹ For other scholars, however, the modern notion of a ‘self’ or ‘selfhood’ did not come into usage in England until around the middle of the seventeenth-century, and did not convey a sense of the modern understanding of ‘ipseity’, individual identity, or ‘possessing a self’.²⁰ The notion that someone like Nehemiah, who died in 1658, therefore, perceived his life as characterized by his possession of a ‘self’ is debatable.

For Booy, Nehemiah’s conception and attempts to construct a ‘self’ were evident from his pietistic practice of monitoring or examining his life for the presence of sinful desires or behaviours, and his efforts to make a record of that examination in his manuscripts. In Booy’s opinion, this practice mirrored the purpose that governed the composition of ‘early-modern spiritual diaries kept by Radical Protestants’. According to Booy, the practice of examining one’s life for sin and writing down the

¹⁷ Booy used the word ‘compulsion’ to describe Nehemiah’s motivation to write in *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 9.

¹⁸ Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, pp. 11 – 13.

¹⁹ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*, Introduction; *Shakespearean negotiations: the circulation of social energy in renaissance England*; and with Giles Gunn, *Redrawing the boundaries: the transformation of English and American literary studies*, Introduction; and *Hamlet In Purgatory*. See also Margo Todd, ‘Puritan self-fashioning: the diary of Samuel Ward’, *Journal of British Studies*, 31, (1992), 236-264; Booy, *Personal Disclosures: An Anthology of Self-writings from the Seventeenth Century*, 4; *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway, and Helen Wilcox eds., Introduction.

²⁰ Sawday, ‘Self and Selfhood in the Seventeenth Century’, p. 30.

results of examination in a diary created a dichotomy between what an individual believed or understood about their life in the world, which they wrote down on paper, and the life that actually existed and performed in the world prior to, during, and even after that evaluation and written record. Booy described this dichotomy, ‘in modern parlance’, as the difference between ‘the writing self and the written self’: the ‘self’ written down was an identity constructed out of an act of a selection from that larger body of material that made up the writing ‘self’. Booy contends that Nehemiah’s construction of a ‘self’ in the pages of his manuscript – the selection of material from that that larger body of material gathered from the writing ‘self’ – was perhaps ‘governed by several forces, the chief of which was the Puritan doctrine to which the diarists, and authors of other types of self-writing, subscribed. This doctrine was so potent and presented such a comprehensive account of human experience that it thoroughly determined the writers’ concepts, concerns and perspectives, and gave them the language in which to express these’. The Puritan doctrine Booy particularly had in mind was the doctrine of ‘conversion’ or ‘the bringing of full assurance of salvation’, which ‘did not come in one overwhelming moment but happened gradually over a lengthy period of striving’.²¹ Rather than an ‘urgency’ or ‘compulsion’ to write from a psychology formed by his relationship with his father or older brother, therefore, Booy suggests that Nehemiah’s desire to write was rooted in a psychology formed by Protestant teachings on spiritual transformation and eternal security.

In many ways, the examination of Nehemiah’s response to death in this thesis has evidenced his struggle with notions of the presentation of a ‘self’ much like the interpretation offered by David Booy, in *The Notebooks of Nehemiah Wallington*

²¹ Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, pp. 13 – 14.

(2007). The similarities between the interpretation offered in this thesis and the interpretation offered by David Booy are detectable in the first chapter of this thesis, where Nehemiah's style and method of writing were examined. In this chapter, the examination of Nehemiah's response to the death of his siblings seemed to affirm that his purpose and approach to writing was similar to other Protestants who practiced daily examination for sin and kept a written record of that examination. The similarities between the interpretation offered in this thesis and the interpretation offered by David Booy are also detectable in the second chapter of this thesis. In this chapter, it was argued that in the years that immediately followed his stepsiblings' death, in 1609, Nehemiah attempted to construct an identity or 'self' that he believed was more acceptable to God and therefore avoid punishment by controlling the sinful desires and behaviours produced by his body.

However, this thesis has also evidenced a difference from Booy's interpretation of Nehemiah's struggle with 'self' by arguing that this struggle changed and developed over time as the result of his attempts to respond to death. This difference was particularly noted by drawing attention to Nehemiah's testimony that his approach to writing and the attempts to construct a 'self' changed round the time his temptations to commit suicide started in 1618. Based on his own testimony in 1618, Nehemiah's style and method of writing began to involve more than an attempt to construct a 'self' from examining his life for sin like that reflected in early modern Protestant diaries. As argued in the first chapter of this thesis, Nehemiah confessed to taking on a more conscious approach to writing that resembled that of autobiography. What this meant was that rather than a method of writing deployed to construct a 'self', Nehemiah's description of his approach to writing his 'books', as he called them, demonstrated an interest in writing for the sake of writing. Nehemiah was still

concerned with his 'self', but wrote to be seen as a writer. He approached his writing with an intentionality that considered how his manuscripts – not simply his outward moral and pietistic efforts – would be judged by himself and others. This is not to say that, in 1618, Nehemiah relinquished his efforts to construct and present a godly 'self' in society, or that writing was no longer part of his pietistic approach in that endeavour. Nehemiah's manuscripts evidence that he continued to seek engagement of his life with the life of others with the utmost concern to do so in a Christian manner. His use of literary devices like the manicule, headers, and dates were probably as much for his own ability to read and navigate his manuscripts as for his readers. Even after experiencing the temptation to negate his 'self' by suicide out of fears that he was unable to construct a more godly identity, Nehemiah continued to search for rules to live by that his 'self' might reflect a godly pattern and recorded those rules into his manuscript. Yet, Nehemiah's manuscripts do reveal, over time, that through his study of death, he eventually came to believe differently about how a godly 'self' came about. Through his reading of the Bible and other books in his attempts to move beyond his temptation to commit suicide, Nehemiah learned that his struggle against sinful desires and behaviours in order to present a godly 'self' was hampered by a condition from which he required deliverance. In focusing his attention on the example of the Apostle Paul, he turned the attention of his study to the question asked by the Apostle in Romans 7:24, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'²² As argued in the fifth chapter of this thesis, the asking of this question did not reflect Nehemiah's desire for 'conversion' or the transformation of his soul, but his continued pursuit for help in confronting a problem that had bothered him from the time of his stepsiblings' death in 1609 – the

²² GL MS 204, fol. 17. Booy, *Notebooks of... Wallington*, p. 43.

ability to engage his life in a Christian manner, or with a ‘self’ that exhibited godly character. Over the course of many years studying death in the Bible and other books, but especially the example of the Apostle Paul, Nehemiah came to understand that his inability control the sinful desires and behaviours produced by his body in order to exhibit a godly ‘self’ – to live a virtuous life in society – demanded his use of pietistic means but also faith and trust in Christ to manifest that ‘self’ in the context of his life with others.

It is in these differences between the interpretation of Nehemiah’s understanding of the ‘self’ outlined above and the interpretation of that understanding offered by Booy that this thesis perhaps offers the most significant contribution to the field of early modern studies, especially for those interested in early modern Protestant autobiography and the application of Protestant doctrine to life experiences. In the case of Nehemiah Wallington, we find an individual who was driven to write by more than an inner psychology due to fears and anxieties related to his relationship with his father or older brother. His desire to write was also more than an attempt to document his experience of ‘conversion’, as outlined in Puritan theology. Nehemiah wrote about his life and the events that occurred around him out of an ambition to be seen like any published writer of his day. More than this, though, one of the central subjects of his writing, and the most basic motivation that lay behind all of his pietistic pursuits, was a desire to engage his life in society out of a godly ‘self’ shaped by his response to death.

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